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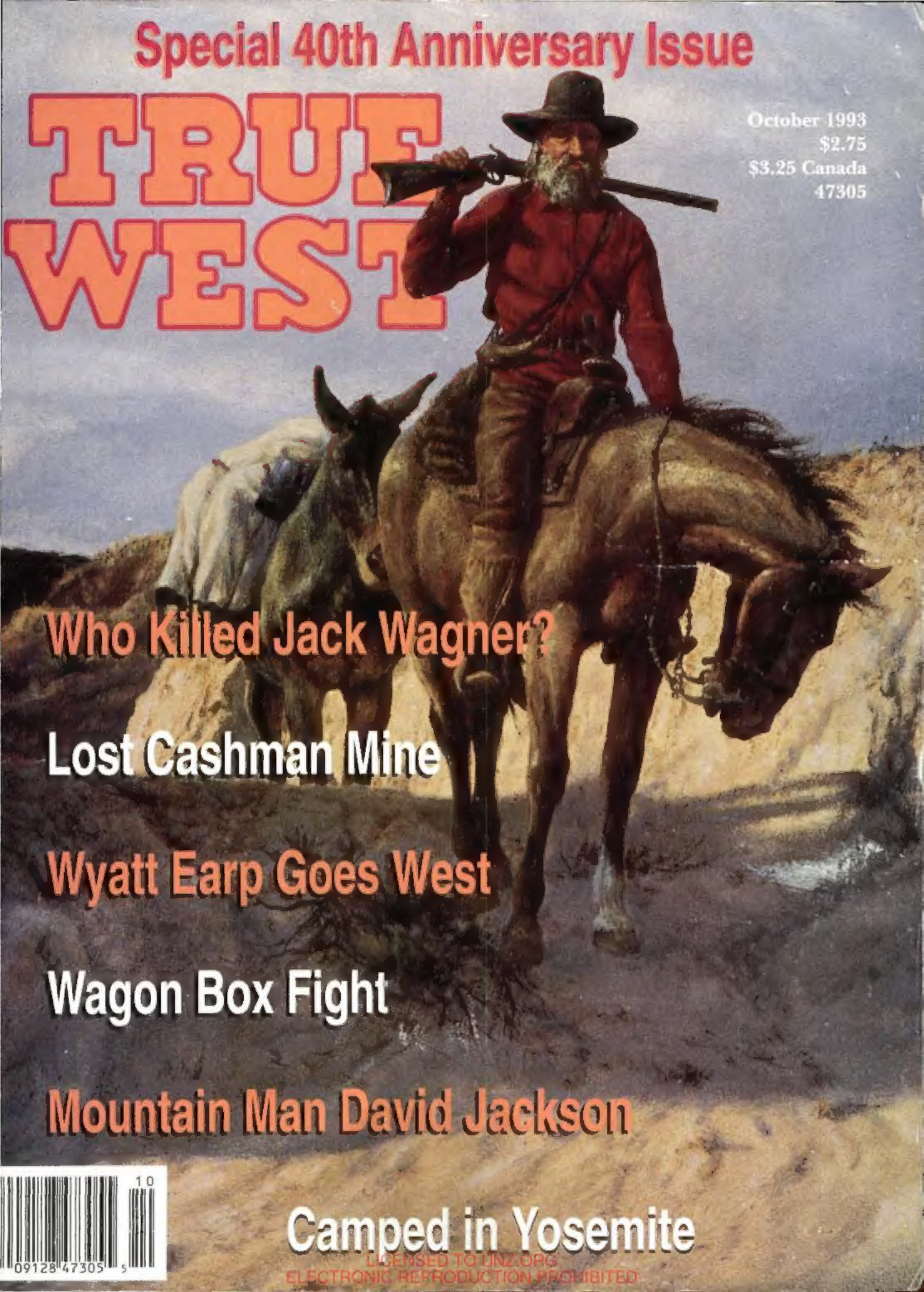

Who Killed Jack Wagner?

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TRUE WEST

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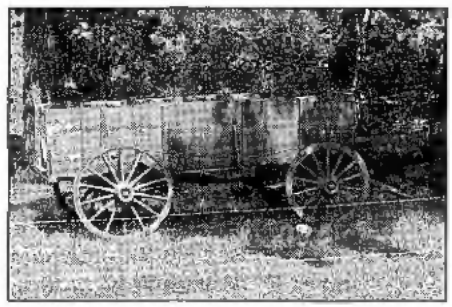

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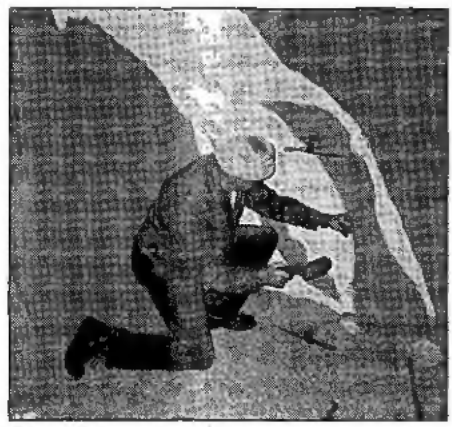

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FROM THE EDITOR

Howdy, folks!

As fast as magazines come and go these days, this fortieth anniversary issue of *True West* marks a truly remarkable milestone. From the time that Joe "Hosstail" Small built the first issue of this humble little publication, dozens of imitators have fallen by the wayside. One or two relative newcomers are still making a show, and we welcome the competition since it mostly bears out what Ol' Hosstail sensed in the beginning: there will always be a market for well told true tales of the Old West, America's most exciting era.

In planning this anniversary issue, I asked myself what would be the best way to celebrate the fact that what began as a dream on Joe and Elizabeth Small's dining room table in 1953 has thrived now for four decades. The answer came in a critic's assessment of another magazine's anniversary issue. He suggested that rather than the "usual self-congratulatory" anniversay issues, the most special of special issues are those that simply publish more pages of the same kind of stories and art for which loyal readers have plunked down their hard-earned cash month after month and year after year.

So that's what we did. You won't find any photos of our staff chowing down an anniversay cake and wearing party hats. You won't find any letters from the President or the Pope telling us what a fine bunch of folks we are and how much they enjoy reading our magazine. And you won't find a six-page feature on my reminiscences of good times and bad times I've had here at the old corral. What you will find is more pages, more articles, and more photographs. Period.

But it wouldn't be right to mark a fortieth anniversary without a tip of the hat to at least some of the people who have made it possible. So from all of us here at the 1993 incarnation of *True West*—Steve Gragert, Charlotte Brown, Kelly Reed, Steve Jones, and me—here's a big thanks to Joe Small for dreaming the dream and making it a reality for himself and for those of us who have had the good fortune to follow in his footsteps. And a special word of thanks to his wife, Elizabeth, who was instrumental not only in *True West* but in all of Joe's successes. I'm sorry to say that Joe's health is failing, but I hope he will read this and know that his successors and his thousands of loyal readers and friends appreciate his achievement in creating a magazine as well loved and enduring as *True West*.

We also want to acknowledge the previous editors and publishers who have guided this pore rag through unpredictable times and over unmarked trails. Editorially, the late Fred Gipson's story-telling abilities still inspire many of our stories; Pat Wagner's steady hand still sets the standard to which we aspire; and Jim Dullenty's boundless energy and enthusiasm remain an example which we try to follow. Former publishers Chet Krause, Bob Evans, and Randy Clausen believed in *True West* during the western genre's darkest years, and saw it through some trying times.

To mention any of the thousands of writers, photographers, and artists whose work has appeared in *True West* would be to slight the rest. But all of us here in Stillwater owe a debt to our good friend Glenn Shirley, who has willingly shared with us his vast knowledge of western history, his formidable talent for writing, and his lifetime of experience with the magazine business. Not to mention the fact that over the years he has written a passel of ripping good yarns for us.

Finally, and most importantly, we want to thank all of you, our readers, who have bought the magazines and responded to the advertisements and made it possible for us to earn a modest but honest living doing something that we love. Whether you've been with us from the very start and have all three hundred and six issues or are reading *True West* for the first time, we're mightily obliged to you and we hope to ride this trail together with you for many years to come.

John Joerschke

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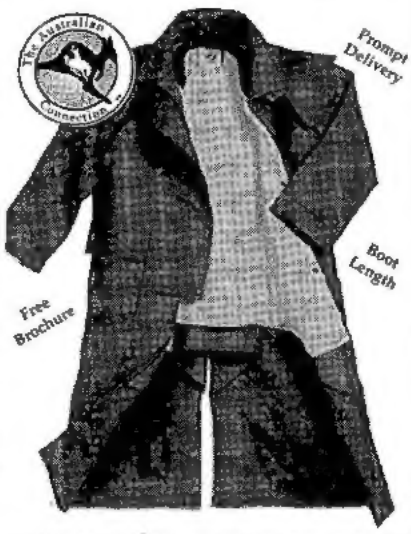

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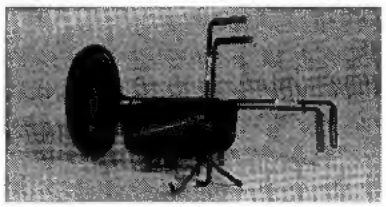
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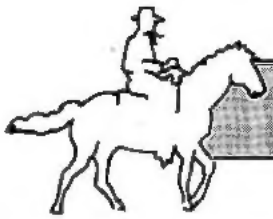

T'other House That Jack Built

"Who Burned the House That Jack Built?" by P.M. Wright (*True West*, August 1993) brought to mind my experience many years ago with Jack London's "other" house, actually a cabin. On a visit to Oakland, California, I noted in a tour guide the existence of the tavern that London frequented and his relocated log cabin from his Yukon gold rush days. The City of Oakland supposedly had acquired the cabin and moved it to the waterfront as a monument to London.

A couple years later I happened to travel to Dawson City, Yukon Territory. They proudly pointed out that this was where London had spent his time during the gold rush and that his log cabin was on one of the side streets. Sure enough, there it was, and it looked quite similar to the one in Oakland.

I began to ask questions about the two cabins, and finally the answer came to light. Seems as though the people of Oakland had gotten some qualified ownership of the original cabin in Dawson City. But when they tried to take it apart and move it to California, the residents of Dawson City put up a big protest.

They finally reached a compromise. The cabin would be divided, half and half, and the Oakland people would have to rebuild the original cabin at Dawson City using new-cut logs to replace the half of the cabin they took. The Oakland people also took along enough new logs from Yukon Territory to rebuild the cabin once they got their half back to California. So visitors to either cabin should keep in mind that they're only looking at half of Jack's original cabin.—**Ivan L. Pfalser, Caney, Kansas.**

Editor's Note: Lucky thing it wasn't Jack London's baby!

Knew All the Old-Timers

The August '93 issue of *True West* is superb. I am a ninety-two-year-old professor, retired from the Univeristy of Texas, Austin. I started reading J. Marvin Hunter's *Frontier Times* when I came to Austin from California to teach at UT.

I knew all the old-timers and am interested in Frank and Jane Phillips, Frank's brother Waite, and all the rest, so I was happy to see the feature on Oklahoma museums in "Western Roundup."

I have two comments: first, Mr. Gilcrease was originally at San Antonio and then went to Big D; second, the Gilcrease Museum in north Tulsa at the edge of the Osage has a wonderful repair shop for old manuscripts. When I was a vice president for science and engineering with Indian Oil and Gas in Tulsa, I took a document which had gotten wet to them and they restored it beautifully.—**George H. Fancher, Austin, Texas.**

Missing Firearms

One thing I miss in your stewardship of *True West* is good gun articles. I am sure your readers would like to see more intimate details on the weapons that were used in settling the American West.

To see it on television and in the movies (rigorously bound by "political correctitude") you would think that the Winchester Model '92 and the Colt Peacemaker were the only weapons west of the Mississippi.

My only other suggestion is don't

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be so stilted and academic. Search for and invoke the "Heavenly Nine."—**Horace B. Weaver, Pantego, North Carolina.**

Editor's Note: I miss good gun articles, too. In fact, I have several good gun writers on notice that I need more firearms stories, but when a magazine's been around forty years, it's tough to come up with weapons stories that we haven't already done.

Meanwhiles, I done searched for and invoked them nine heavenly critters, but I ain't seen nary a one of 'em.

A Friend of Bill Carlisle

When I bought the June '93 issue of *True West*, I was surprised to see the story on Bill Carlisle, "The Last Cowboy Bandit," by Murray L. Carroll. I knew Bill Carlisle and Lillian Berquist, who was head of our old Lincoln County Miners Hospital. That was Kemmerer's first hospital. The coal miners built it; my father gave one hundred dollars plus one week of work to build it.

I also knew Father Gerard Schellinger. He was our priest before he became prison chaplain. When he gave up his position as prison chaplain, he came back to Kemmerer. Father Schellinger did more than anyone to have Bill pardoned.

Bill came to live in Kemmerer because Father Schellinger was here. Bill had a magazine stand and a lounge next to the bar in the old Kemmerer Hotel.

When Bill committed his first train robbery, he had bought a glass pistol full of candy in Denver. He was going to send it to a nephew in Pennsylvania but ran out of money. He was very hungry, so he ate the candy and used the glass gun to hold up the train.

John, you should have twenty pages of every issue set aside for good western stories without any killing or shooting—**Louis A. Bazzanella, Kemmerer, Wyoming.**

Your letters and comments are welcome. Please keep letters to 300 words or less. All letters received by Western Publications will be considered for publication unless otherwise stipulated in the letter. Space does not permit us to print all letters we receive. Be sure to include full name, address, and zip code. Photos are welcome. Address all letters to Western Publications, PO Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Due to the volume of mail, we cannot forward correspondence to people whose letters appear in "Truly Western."

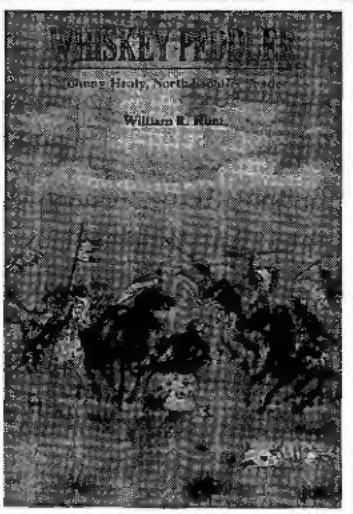
Whiskey Peddler

Johnny Healy, North Frontier Trader

William R. Hunt

Though volumes of raw material about Johnny Healy's years in Montana, Idaho, and Alberta in the mid-nineteenth century have accumulated in historical societies and library archives, his story has never been fully told until now. As a miner, sheriff, whiskey peddler, and buffalo robe trader, Johnny was among those who displaced the Indians and destroyed their way of life. Nevertheless, this "Merchant Prince" helped usher a new civilization into the West, before the challenge of new adventures drew him to Alaska in 1885, where the enterprising trader supplied the needs of Yukon-bound miners. Quick to win and quick to lose, Healy eventually ended up financially destitute but among the richest of all men in frontier experiences.

His story is told here in rich, vivid detail by historian Bill Hunt, who spent years researching and writing about this consummate frontiersman so that we might understand something of his life and times.



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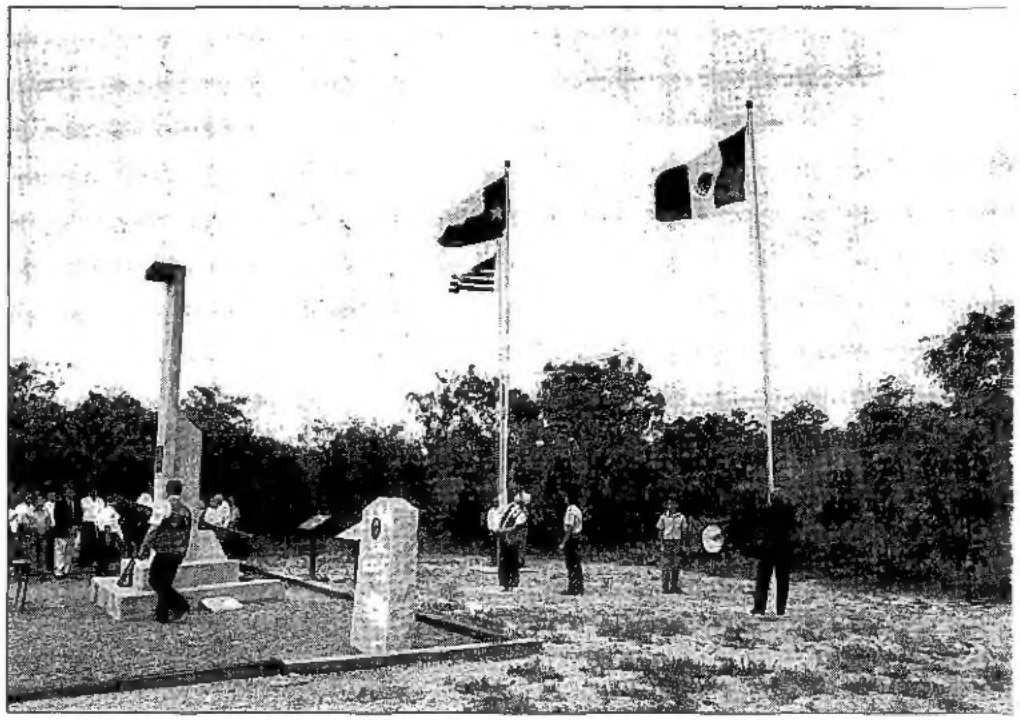
Mexican War Site Preserved

By CHARLES M. ROBINSON, III

The Mexican War, 1846–47, is frequently forgotten, overshadowed by the Civil War, which began thirteen years later. Yet the Mexican War was important for the United States. It truly won the West by extending the boundaries of the United States to the Pacific Ocean. It served as a training ground for both Union and Confederate officers, and it was the first war the United States waged in a foreign country.

As most of the battles occurred within the present boundaries of Mexico, Mexican War sites in the United States are few. The most important such site, and the only major site in the United States which is still intact, is Palo Alto Battlefield in South Texas.

The historic site is now slated for preservation as part of the National Park System. Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site was formally dedicated May 8, the 147th anniversary of the battle. Negotiations are underway for purchase of the 3,400-acre site, which Congress authorized June 23, 1992.



Author's Photo

Participants at ceremonies commemorating the Battle of Palo Alto raise the flags of the United States, Mexico, and Texas at the historic battlefield park May 8. The Texas flag flies separately because, at the time of the battle in 1846, Texas had only been in the Union for three months and its armies fought as distinct units.

Aside from its historic significance, federal officials note that the battlefield appears much the same as when the battle occurred in 1846. During the past year, National Park Service archaeological investigations have unearthed many relics.

The purpose of the park is not only to portray the battle, but also the political, social, and military ramifications of the war in general, according to Thomas B. Carroll, superintendent of the battlefield. "The heart of this issue is how we can sensitively and accurately interpret the Battle of Palo Alto and the Mexican-American War from the perspectives of both Mexico and the United States," Carroll said. "The story cannot be told accurately if the views and the historical data of only one country are presented."

Officials point out that the war, which cost Mexico half its territory, is still a sensitive issue in that country; many Mexicans call it the "War of North American Intervention." Nevertheless, some of the wounds appear to be healing, particularly with Mexican enthusiasm for the three-day Palo Alto conference of historians from both countries, held in Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, in conjunction with the dedication. The conference included a tour of Mexican War sites in Matamoros, dinner and entertainment hosted by that city's technological institute, and a two-day tour of Mexican War sites in northern Mexico, including Monterrey, Saltillo, and Buena Vista.

The National Park Service is presently hiring staff to develop the park, working in conjunction with Mexican counterparts. Plans also call for making the Palo Alto conference an annual event.

The only other major Mexican War battlefield in the United States is Resaca de la Palma, where combatants fought on May 9, 1846; it is approximately nine miles from Palo Alto. Resaca de la Palma, however, is inside the Brownsville city limits and has been largely commercially developed. Although about twenty-six acres of the site are still undeveloped, park service officials question whether it can also be protected by the federal government in the face of budget cutbacks as, unlike Palo Alto, it is prime real estate.

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Expanded and Remodeled Pony Express Museum Opens

When young Johnny Fry galloped out of a St. Joseph, Missouri, stable April 3, 1860, with a mail pouch on his horse Sylph, he started on the first leg of what would become one of the West's most enduring legends—the Pony Express. The Pony Express National Memorial, in the same stable where Fry began his journey, keeps the legend alive with exhibits and hands-on displays about the mail service.

The memorial recently completed a $1.7 million expansion project. Officials opened the renovated facility April 3, the 133rd anniversary of Fry's ride.

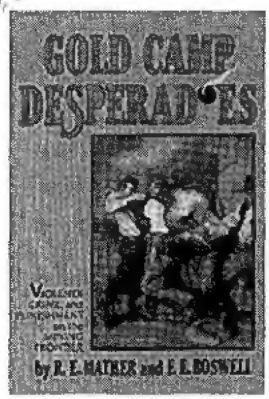
Fry was one of about one hundred Pony Express riders who made trips of seventy-five miles each, changing horses every ten to fifteen miles. They created a chain of couriers that carried mail to Sacramento, California, 1,966 miles away.

Founded by William H. Russell, Alexander Majors, and William B. Waddell, the Pony Express in 1860 could beat the delivery time of two existing mail contractors by almost two weeks. Despite that achievement, the Express lasted only eighteen months. Coast-to-coast telegraph lines eliminated the need for fast delivery, and the Pony Express was defunct by October 1861.

Nevertheless, during their short time of service, Pony Express riders completed 616 deliveries to and from Sacramento, covering 650,000 miles in eight present-day states. Even though they rode through blizzards, heat, and dangerous territory, they lost only one rider killed and one mailbag.

After the demise of the Pony Express, the original stables changed hands sixteen times. Half of them had disintegrated and the other half were badly deteriorated when St. Joseph brewery owner M. Karl Goetz bought the property in 1950. He paid for partial reconstruction, and the Pony Express Museum opened in 1959.

By 1990 the museum boasted more than 40,000 visitors annually. Space for exhibits and memorabilia, however,



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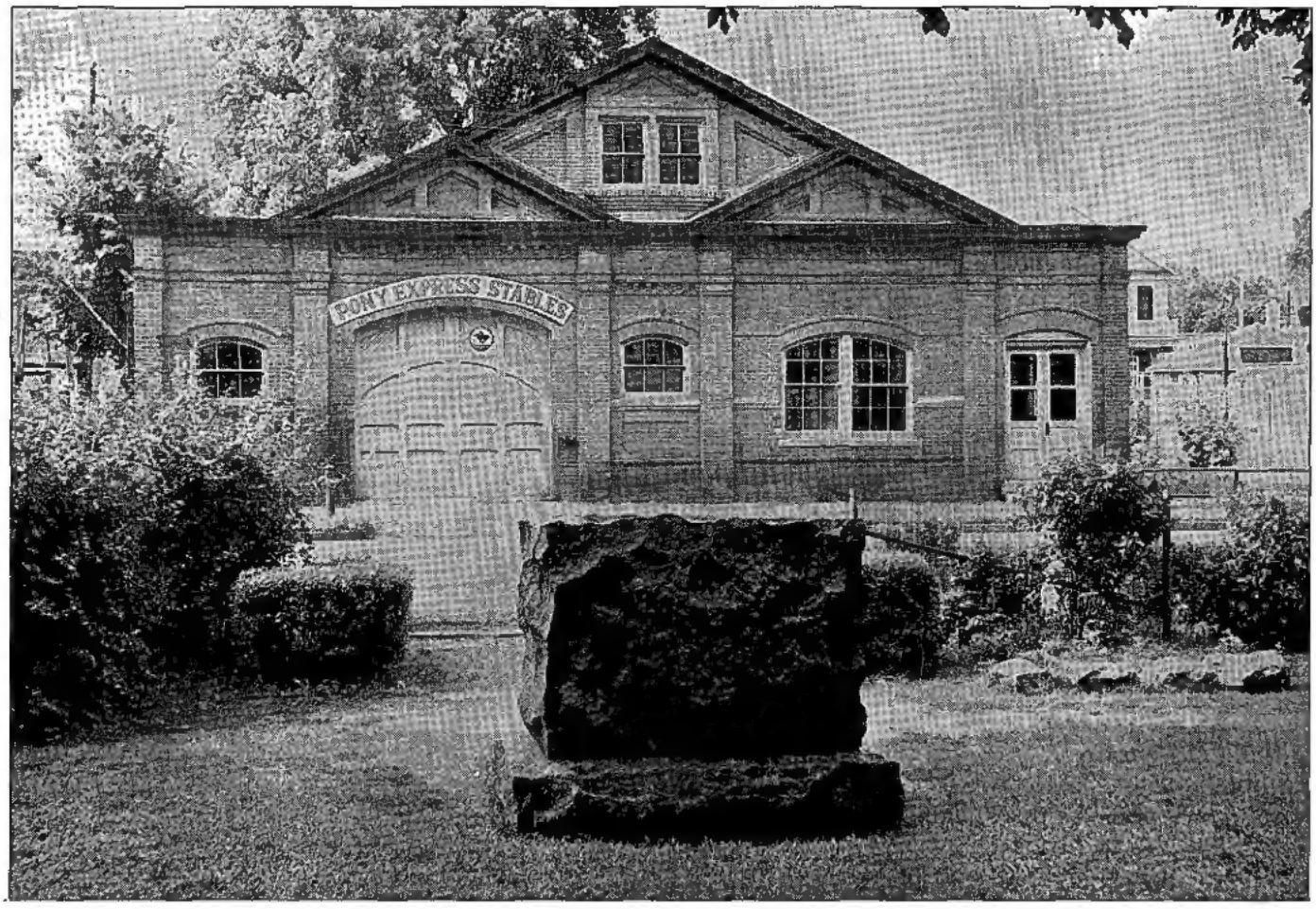

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The Pony Express National Memorial in St. Joseph, Missouri. The museum recently completed a $1.7 million expansion program.

was cramped.

That year civic and business leaders formed Pony Express, Inc., to raise funds for a two-phase restoration and expansion project. The result, with more than 4,000 square feet of space (double the former amount), incorporates an eighty-foot, three-dimensional diorama of the trail from St. Joseph to Sacramento, complete with simulated changes in weather and light conditions. A lighted map also shows way-station locations.

Near the museum a life-sized Johnny Fry sits atop Sylph in a monument entitled, "A Moment in Time." Lifelike models of other horses stand in a series of stalls faithful to the originals.

Behind the facility is a "hands-on" covered wagon with typical provisions that westbound pioneers would have carried. Costumed interpreters stationed throughout the facility are available to answer questions, and an orientation video provides background of the Pony Express.

A new community room is connected to the stables by a hallway and will be used as a gallery for changing art exhibits related to the Pony Express. Future plans call for the addition of a living history facility just west of the current structures.

The Pony Express National Memorial is at 914 Penn Street in St. Joseph. Between April and September the museum is open Monday through Saturday, from 9:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., Sunday from 1:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. Between October and March, it is open Monday through Saturday, from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., and Sunday from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. The museum is closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. For more information phone (816) 279-5059.

Western Roundup is a report on places to go and things to see associated with the history of the Old West. Submissions are welcome. Information on scheduled events should be submitted at least four months prior to the event. Items on historic places are also welcome. Send information including photos to Western Roundup, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076.

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New Mexico Legend

By CHUCK PARSONS

New Mexico lawman Elfego Baca, famous for a standoff with cowboys in 1884, has always been a popular western character. Tim Dye, Stafford, Kansas, wants to know more about him.

Baca's reputation is perhaps due as much to his own publicity as to his accomplishments in law enforcement. He authored his own life story, which was published in the early 1920s. Kyle S. Crichton expanded that story in his 1928 book *Law and Order, Ltd.*

Born in 1865 in Socorro, New Mexico Territory, Baca received a good education at Topeka, Kansas. He returned home in 1880 and soon became interested in law and order. His father was town marshal at Belen, New Mexico, and Elfego assisted him.

On October 26, 1884, Baca was appointed deputy sheriff for Socorro County under Sheriff Pedro A. Simpson. Baca soon became involved in the incident that brought him fame.

What started as the arrest of celebrating cowboy Charles McCarthy turned into a gun battle which many writers have greatly embellished. Some of McCarthy's friends later demanded his release and attempted to free the prisoner by force. One of the cowboys was wounded in the attempt and another was seriously injured when his horse fell on him. The wounded cowboy soon died.

When the angry and drunken cowboys turned the incident into a gun battle, Baca shot and mortally wounded another cowboy, William B. Hearne, who died October 30, 1884. The cowboys then obtained an arrest warrant from Justice J.P. Wilson charging Baca with murder. Baca resisted the cowboys and took refuge in an old house where he withstood a barrage of bullets for twenty-four hours.

The cowboys fired several hundred rounds into the dwelling but Baca held out. He agreed to surrender only to another deputy and only if he could keep his guns. Baca eventually was acquitted because he was acting in his official capacity of deputy sheriff when the killing occurred.

Baca was admitted to the New Mexico Bar in 1894 and ultimately served as mayor, county clerk, school superintendent, and district attorney. He was elected sheriff of Socorro County in November 1918, served one term, then returned to his law practice. He died August 27, 1945. The most reliable biography of Baca is Larry D. Ball's 1992 book *Elfego Baca in Life and Legend*.

Photo courtesy Robert K. DeArment

Jim White, "The Boss Hunter."

Gunfighter's Grave

Cliff Greene, Cypress, Texas, recently sent me a cemetery inventory which says John Wesley Hardin is buried in Thieves Mountain Cemetery in Leon County, Texas. Mr. Greene wants to know if that is true.

Hardin was captured in 1877 in Florida and returned to Texas. He stood trial and served sixteen years in prison before being pardoned in 1894. He drifted to El Paso where he was shot and killed August 19, 1895.

Hardin's burial place in the Old Concordia Cemetery in El Paso is well known. A marker was placed on his grave September 29, 1965, thanks to the twenty-two-year effort of C.L. "Doc" Sonnichsen and members of the Hardin family to mark the site.

Boss Hunter

Jim White was perhaps the most successful of all the buffalo hunters of the West. Carl H. Herriman, Carson City, Nevada, asks for more information about him.

Jim White killed more buffalo than any other man in the world, according to his partner, hunter O.P. Hanna. White's skill earned him the nickname "Boss Hunter."

White was born Jim Wilson in 1828, the son of English immigrants in Illinois. He left home in his teens and headed west. Wilson first served as a wagon boss and forage master for the Union Army in the Civil War and continued to work for the army after the war. He was at Fort Phil Kearny at the time of the Fetterman Massacre and was in the Wagon Box Fight in 1867. He fled Mora, New Mexico Territory, after a shooting scrape in 1868. Winding up in Texas, Wilson changed his name to White.

White became a cowhand and helped drive cattle to Kansas. In the fall of 1870 White stayed in Kansas to try his luck at hunting buffalo. One of his first partners was J. Wright Mooar.

White is credited with developing the techniques of setting up a "stand" downwind of buffalo herds. Sitting or prone on the ground, a good hunter could often kill one hundred or more animals. During the 1870s White hunted and worked with such well known personalities as Jim, Ed, and Bat Masterson, Tom Nixon, Levi Richardson, and Henry Raymond.

After hunters had destroyed the great herds, White hunted deer and elk, trapped beaver, and poisoned wolves. He was murdered in late October 1880 while camping at the

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mouth of Shell Canyon in the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming. White's partner, O.P. Hanna, found his friend's partially buried body. He suspected a disgruntled employee named Miller, but no charges were ever filed and no one was ever positively identified as the killer.

Years later White's body was moved to Old Trail Town outside Cody, Wyoming. His marker reads:

Jim White
Buffalo Hunter
1828–1880
"The Boss Hunter"

A biography of White by Robert K. DeArment appeared in the April 1989 issue of *True West*.

Jesse's Children

The families of Frank and Jesse James often create as much interest as the outlaws themselves. Bill Pecard, Monmouth, Oregon, would like to know what happened to Jesse's children.

Jesse married Zerelda "Zee" Mimms on April 24, 1874. They had four children: Jesse Edwards, born August 31, 1875, in Nashville, Tennessee; twins, Gould and Montgomery, who died shortly after their birth; and Mary Susan, born in Nashville June 17, 1879.

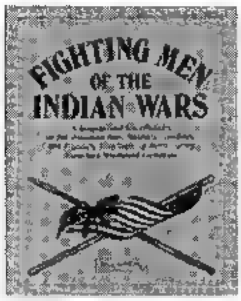
Jesse Edward married Stella McGowan January 24, 1900. He died March 26, 1951, in California. Mary Susan married Henry L. Barr March 6, 1901. She died October 11, 1935, in Kansas City, Missouri.

Mark of a Man

Mountain man and trailblazer William "Old Bill" Williams used to mark his beaver pelts "William Williams M.T." Daniel A. Massant, Brussels, Belgium, wants to know what the initials "M.T." stood for.

The initials simply stood for Master Trapper, which Old Bill certainly was.

If you have a question, send it to Chuck Parsons, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Please keep questions brief. Sign your full name and address, including zip code. Names will be published if question is used. Space limitations may not permit us to use all questions. Due to the volume of mail, we cannot forward correspondence to people whose questions appear in "Answer Man."



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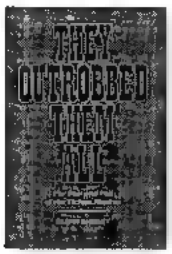

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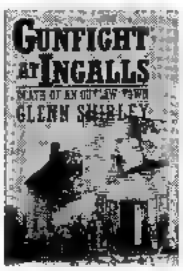

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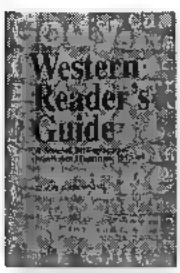

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Who Killed Jack Wagner?

By Bob Palmquist

New evidence proves Bat Masterson avenged his brother's death in 1878.

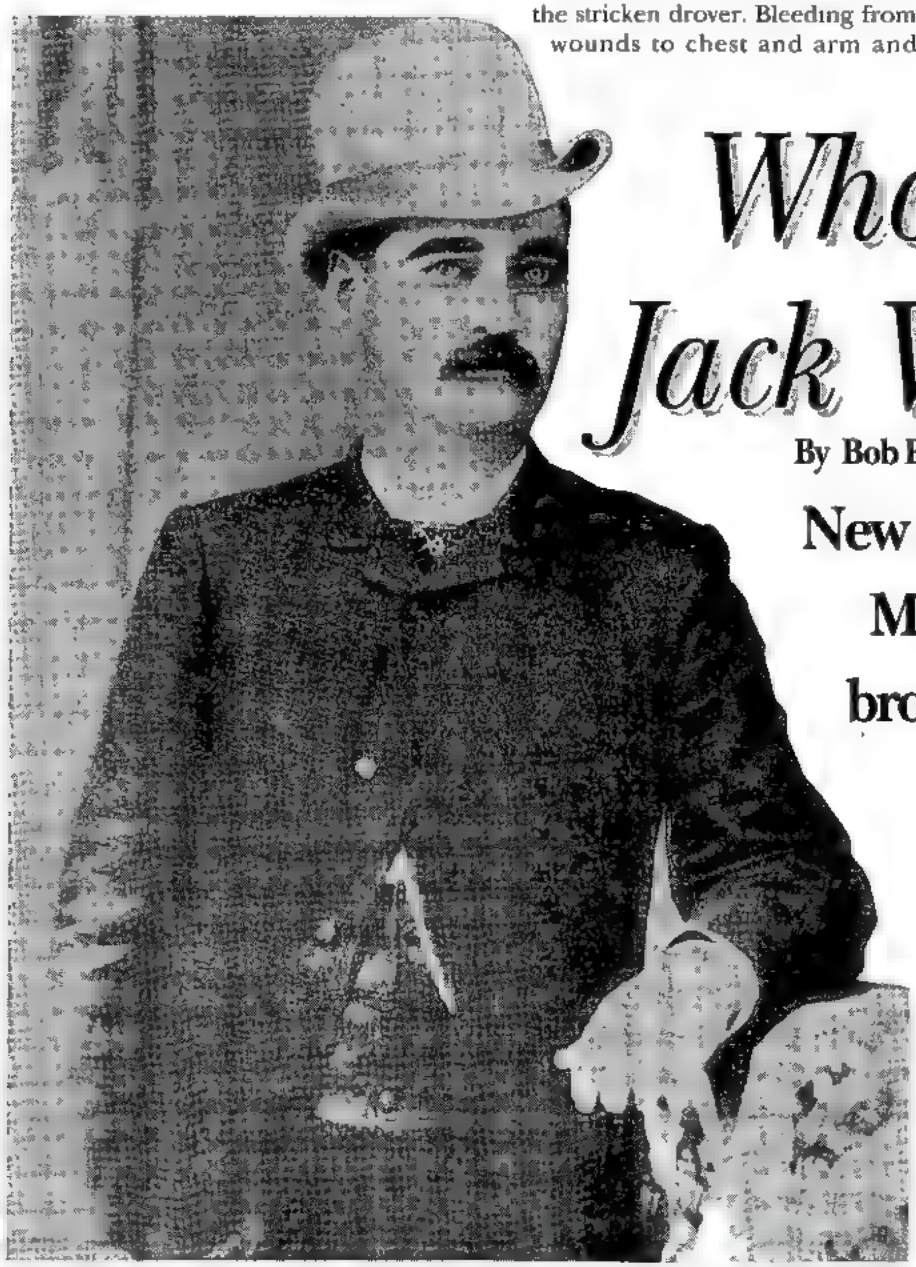
On the night of April 9, 1878, Dodge City marshal Edward J. Masterson died after a fight with cowboys Jack Wagner and Alfred Walker outside the Lady Gay dancehall on Front Street. Many historians have accepted that Masterson avenged his own death by killing Wagner and wounding Walker in the fight. But evidence in an unlikely court case eight years later suggests that Ed's brother, Bat Masterson, then sheriff of Ford County, actually did the avenging.

The fight began when Ed attempted to disarm the drunken Wagner; a struggle ensued outside the saloon. "Ed! Shove him away from you!" came a frantic cry from the deep shadows Bat later said he had yelled at his brother. Wagner's pistol cracked once, and Masterson took the blast at point-blank range; the marshal's shirtfront and coat caught fire. Walker, Wagner's boss, entered the fray; then five more shots followed, coming "almost simultaneously," a Dodge City *Times* reporter wrote. George Reighard, a Dodge City freighter, dived onto the floor of the Lady Gay when the shooting erupted. He thought the five shots came "so quick it sounded like a Gatling."

ONLOOKERS SCATTERED. Wagner staggered, gut-shot, into A.J. Peacock's saloon adjoining the Lady Gay and collapsed. Walker followed the stricken drover. Bleeding from wounds to chest and arm and waving a pistol limply in his uninjured hand, Walker shouted that he didn't want his six-shooter. He found no sympathy. "If you don't want it, throw it away," one of the saloon inmates advised. The weapon clattered against the floorboards as Walker weaved out the back door and hit the ground outside.

Dodge City attorney Harry Gryden, a friend of the Masterson brothers, stood outside George Hoover's saloon on the north side of Front Street. He squinted through the darkness at a light which seemed to be wobbling across the cowtown's doublewide main street. "That cigar he's smoking is burning remarkably lively," Gryden drawled. But as the wavering light drew closer, it revealed the ghastly form of Ed Masterson, walking with halting gait, his clothes still ablaze. Ed brushed by the shaken lawyer and through Hoover's front doors. To George Hinkle, the bartender, Ed gasped, "George, I'm shot." Then he sank slowly to the floor.

Ed Masterson died about 10:30 P.M., a half hour after the shooting, in the rooms of his brother, Bat. Within an hour after the shooting, Bat had rounded up John Hungate, Thomas Highlander, Tom Roads, and John Reece, cowboys who had accompanied Wagner and Walker in their revelry at the Lady Gay prior to Ed's murder. As they had done no shooting, all four were soon released. Wagner died the next day from his wound to the



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka Kansas

William "Bat" Masterson.

abdomen, while Walker recovered from one shot to the lungs and several in his right arm.

Dodge City newspapers immediately began reporting that Ed had avenged his own murder by killing Wagner and wounding Walker. The day after the shootings, an extra edition of the Ford County Globe asserted that "Marshal Masterson...shot Wagner" after the officer himself was hit, and commented that Walker "got shot through the right lung, and his right arm was twice broken." The Dodge City *Times*, rival to the *Globe*, likewise stated that after Ed Masterson took Wagner's slug in the stomach, the marshal "fired four shots, one of them striking Wagner in the bowels from the left side. Walker was struck three times, one shot in the lungs and his right arm horribly shattered with the other shots." The *Globe's* regular edition of April 16, 1878, one week after the murder, said that upon Ed's mortal wound, "five shots followed in quick succession. A general rush was made from the scene, and all was over."

THE *GLOBE* reported that Ed's death wound was from a gunshot so close that "his clothes were still on fire from the discharge of [Wagner's] pistol, which had been placed against the right side of his abdomen and 'turned loose.'" Wagner's bullet, said the *Globe* reporter, inflicted "a hole large enough for the introduction of the whole pistol," and "passed completely through" the marshal. According to those stories, Ed Masterson, after the bullet slammed through his vitals, drew and fired either four or five shots, four of which struck home.

But were those newspaper reports accurate? They may have seemed plausible at first, as Ed had suffered a gunshot wound the previous November and still managed to arrest his opponent. But the wound Wagner inflicted was much worse, almost identical to one which immediately dropped Tombstone, Arizona, marshal Fred White. While Ed was able to stagger down the street, he likely did not shoot his assailants.

Further conflicting evidence began to appear within three years of the shooting. In August 1881 a New York *Sun* correspondent, visiting in Gunnison, Colorado, eagerly reported a friend's story of how Bat Masterson—not Ed—had evened the score for Ed's death by killing four of the marshal's cowboy attackers. The reporter's source, whom he identified as Dr. W.S. Cochrell, supposedly pointed out Bat in a Gunnison crowd. The doctor said Masterson "has killed twenty-six men, and he has only twenty-seven years of age," then spun a gory tale of shootings and even beheadings for the avid reporter.

Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas

Ed Masterson, who died following a Dodge City gunfight. Many historians have maintained Ed avenged his own death.

In November 1881 a Kansas City *Journal* reporter interviewed Bat Masterson and Harry Gryden about the *Sun's* yarn. The reporter commented that Bat's record of kills "cannot be positively ascertained without careful and extensive research, for he is himself quite reticent on the subject." But Bat, seconded by Gryden, *did* confirm that he had shot Ed's killers three years earlier.

Many accounts of Ed Masterson's death followed that line. In 1896, Bat's friend Wyatt Earp told a San Francisco reporter that "a crowd of cowboys started shooting in the...dancehall one night and Ed went over to see about it. He disarmed them all and made them pile their guns behind the bar. Then he returned across the deadline—the avenue formed by the railroad tracks—which divided the decent from the disreputable part of the town. Not long afterward, however, the cowboys recovered their six-shooters and began firing again. Ed went back to restore order and tried to disarm the first cowboy he encountered. The two men were scuffling for possession of the gun, when another cowboy fired at Ed Masterson and killed him.

"Just at that moment," Earp continued, "Bat Masterson had appeared, attracted by the shooting. He saw his brother fall and with a quick drop killed the man who had fired the shot. The rest began to run away shooting and Bat winged the man with whom Ed had been scuffling. He died a few days later, while they were taking him back to Texas."

WYATT EARP had been gambling and chasing fugitives in Texas when Ed Masterson died, and he presumably got his version from Bat after returning to Dodge City in May 1878. A Kansas writer, Edward G. Little, in a 1902 magazine article, declared that "in the twinkling of an eye [Bat] had whipped a drunken mob of mad killers, slain two men, avenged his brother's death, and restored order in Dodge City."

Three years later, Bat Masterson's journalist friend Alfred Henry Lewis made Bat the hero of a biographical novel, *The Sunset Trail*. Describing Ed's death, Lewis told how Bat, "from sixty feet away...put three bullets into Mr.

Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas

Mr. and Mrs. George M. Hoover. Ed Masterson collapsed in Hoover's saloon after the gunfight.

Walker before the latter could fall," then shot Wagner in the head with his "revengeful pistol."

Lewis repeated that version in an ostensibly factual Masterson profile in a 1907 issue of *Human Life* magazine. "I have no doubt [Bat] made the murderers pay the penalty," agreed pioneer Dodge City merchant Bob Wright in his 1913 book about the town. In the 1920s, Wyatt Earp told his ghostwriter, John H. Flood, Jr., that Bat Masterson evened the score, almost at the same instant [that Ed fell], but it was too late to save his brother's life." Later writers such as Walter Noble Burns, Stuart N. Lake, Richard O'Connor, and Stanley Vestal all tagged Bat Masterson as Ed's avenger. Vestal did so in spite of the fact that he quoted from the *Globe and Times* accounts which had Ed doing his own avenging.

Another group of writers has rejected the idea that Bat killed Ed's assailants. In 1957 Pat Jahns began *The Frontier World of Doc Holliday* with a salute to the "real heroes" of the frontier, among whom she numbered "Ed Masterson, mortally wounded, walking alone across Front Street in the dusk after shooting his drunken assailants." In 1968 Nyle H. Miller and Joseph W. Snell wrought a revolution in gunsmoke historiography with *Why The West Was Wild*. The book and its subsequent abridgment, *Great Gunfighters of the Kansas Cowtowns*, reprinted hundreds of contemporary Kansas newspaper articles including the *Globe and Times* reports crediting Ed Masterson with downing Wagner and Walker.

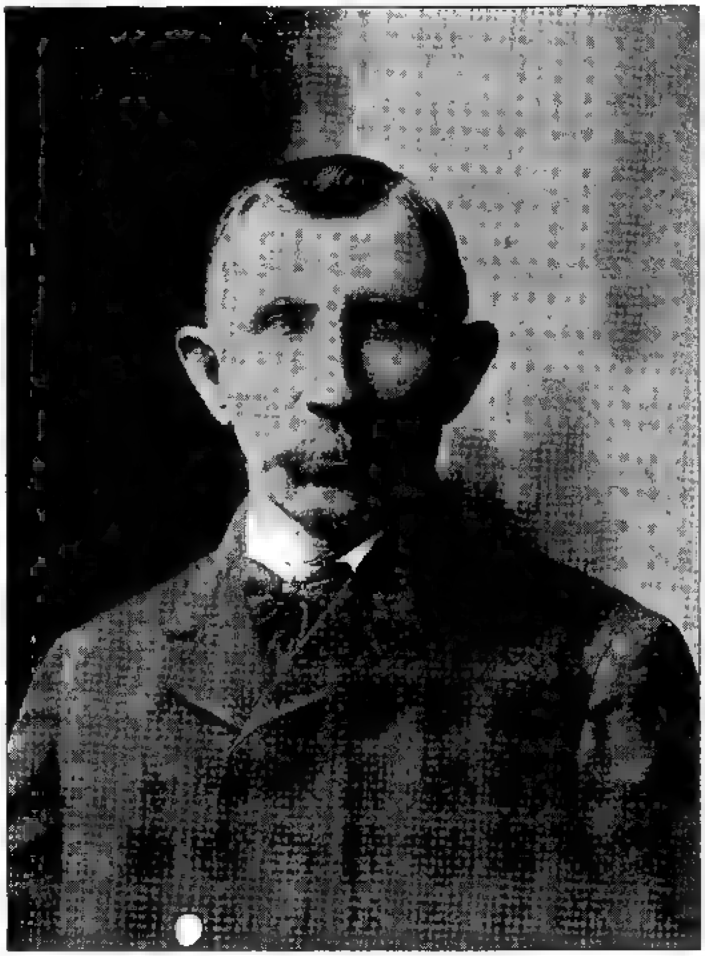
Most writers since the publication of the Miller and Snell book have rejected the picture of Bat Masterson as his brother's avenger. Robert K. DeArment, Masterson's best biographer, in *Bat Masterson, The Man and the Legend* (1979), writes that "there is no hard evidence that Bat Masterson ever killed anyone." In a 1982 annotation to Alfred Henry Lewis' 1907 "King of the Gun-Players" article about Bat, Jack DeMattos states that "of all of Bat Masterson's bogus claims, none seems as downright reprehensible as his trying to grab the glory for avenging his brother's death, when it was clearly Ed Masterson, and not Bat, who shot both Walker and Wagner." Perhaps the most recent expression of that view is in Richard E. Erwin's *The Truth About Wyatt Earp* (1992), in which the author concludes that "the story that Bat Masterson with a fast gun avenged the death of his brother by killing both of his attackers has been told for many years, but there is no evidence that it is true."

THAT IS WHAT the historians have said, but what did Bat Masterson himself have to say about the incident, and what did his contemporaries in Dodge City believe Bat did the night of Ed's death? As is the case with Bat's friend Wyatt Earp, Bat's own version of his exploits is often difficult to ascertain, as most tales originating with him were filtered through the imaginations of writers like Alfred Henry Lewis or the New York *Sun's* correspondent.

Masterson's own version, briefly but clearly told, appears in an unlikely place—a court transcript containing Masterson's testimony in an election lawsuit eight years after Ed's slaying. Several prominent Dodge City citizens gave testimony supporting Bat's story in the same hearings.

The election controversy that formed the basis for Bat's testimony arose in the fall of 1885 during Dodge City's transformation from a cowtown to a farming and mercantile center. An influx of sodbusters into Ford County, along with strict exclusion of Texas cattle from the farmers' newly fenced pastures, spelled a finish to the open range trailherd trade upon which Dodge City had thrived for a decade.

The 1885 Ford County sheriff's election reflected those changes. Bat Masterson's friend—and his successor as sheriff—Patrick F. Sughrue, ran for reelection on the People's Ticket, supposedly dedicated to preserving the "saloon crowd's" free-wheeling hegemony over Dodge City politics and government. When R.W. Tarbox, Sughrue's opponent, lost the election by 126 votes, he filed a suit with the Kansas Supreme Court, charging that Sughrue's partisans had committed fraud at the polls.



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas

Ford County Sheriff Patrick F. Sughrue, whose voter fraud trial disclosed the truth about the killing of Jack Wagner

Masterson's own version, briefly but clearly told, appears in an unlikely place—a court transcript containing Masterson's testimony in an election lawsuit eight years after Ed's slaying.

TARBOX'S attorneys found Bat Masterson, a genuine gunman who had been written up in the New York *Sun* and the *Police Gazette,* a particularly inviting target. Deputized by Sughrue, Bat had worked the polling places on election day, checking registrations and keeping order (something he and Wyatt Earp had done two years earlier when Sughrue won his first term). A voter named Lee Jones, thrusting toward the polling places, had shoved Masterson from behind, provoking an offhand shove in return from the gunfighter. Playing on Masterson's reputation, Tarbox's lawyers sought to portray the November 1885 sheriff's election as one in which gun-toughs like Bat, in the pay of Dodge's dissolute saloon and gambling crowd, intimidated voters into either shunning the polls altogether or voting for a representative of the "bad old days." In contrast, they painted Tarbox as a spokesman for the steady and responsible farmers and stockmen who had transformed Ford County.

The Kansas Supreme Court appointed S.L. Seabrook a "special commissioner" to take testimony in the case. Seabrook began his task in the Ford County courthouse in Dodge City in June 1886, moved the hearings to Topeka, then took additional depositions in Dodge before concluding late that summer.

Much of the testimony related to Bat Masterson's record as a man-killer, with witnesses responding to questions about Bat's standing in the community. Most, like stagecoach operator Philander Gillette Reynolds, testified as to whether they had heard of the New York *Sun's* claim that Bat had slain a man for every year of his life, and most responded like Reynolds when he said, "Yes, but I don't think there is many in this place that believe it."

Some replied in more detail about Bat's shooting scrapes. George Hoover, in whose saloon the wounded Ed Masterson collapsed, had helped found Dodge City in 1872 and had known Bat Masterson since that time. In his testimony, Hoover denied that the Dodge public regarded Bat as a killer.

"Didn't he kill here?" one of Tarbox's lawyers asked Hoover.

"Yes, sir," Hoover replied.

"You say, notwithstanding that," the attorney continued, "it was not the impression that he would kill men?"

"Well," Hoover answered, "unless there was something justifiable in it. Only once that I ever knew of him killing, and that was the time his brother was shot."

P.G. Reynolds opposed the Masterson faction in the election controversy. But when quizzed about Bat's reputation for veracity, Reynolds responded that he had never heard it questioned. "I would take his statement....I believe if Bat said he would do a thing, he would." Reynolds then answered questions about Bat's involvement the night of Ed Masterson's death.

"Was not his brother City Marshal?" a lawyer asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Reynolds.

"His brother was killed by a Texas cowman?"

"Yes, sir."

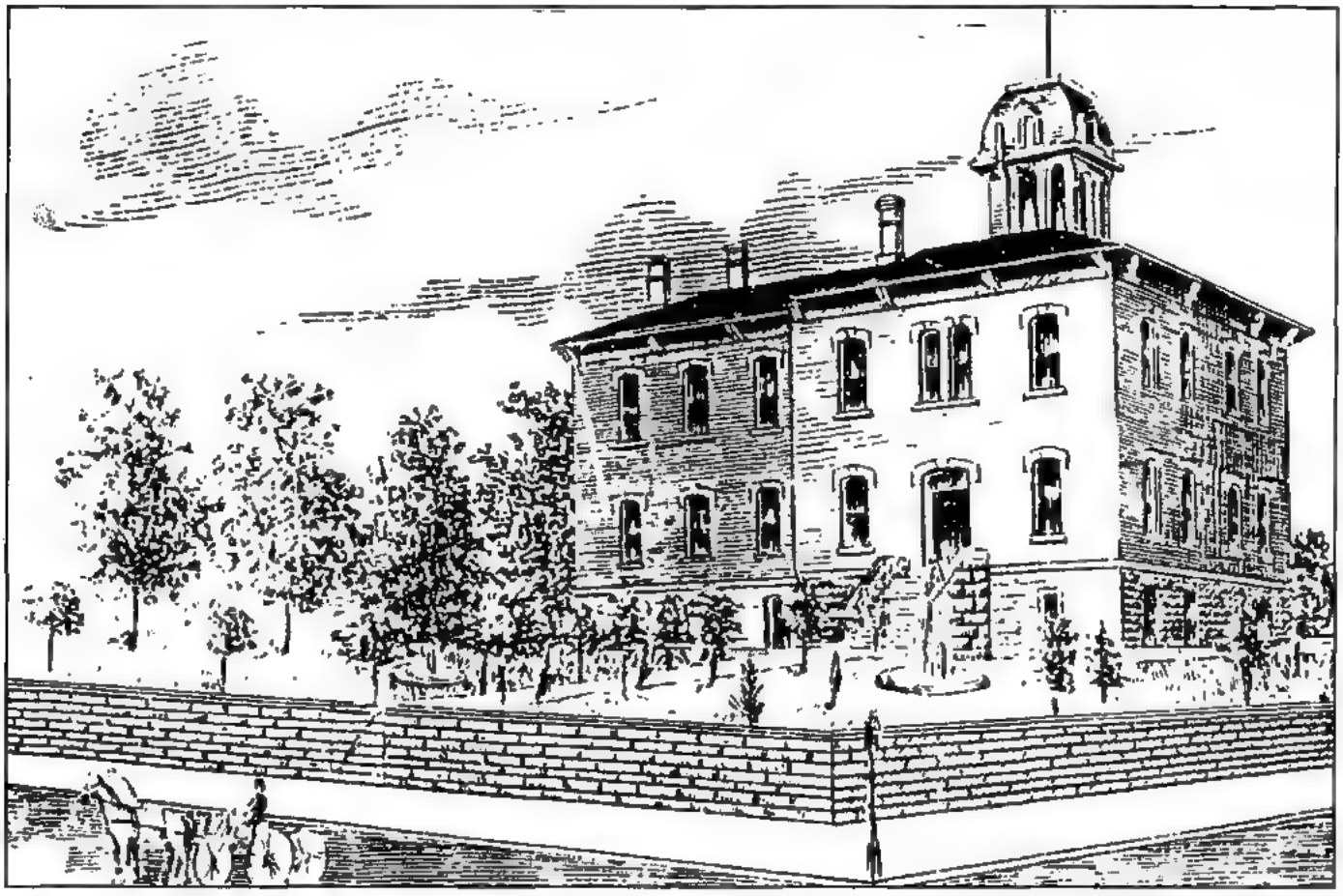
"Right in his very presence?"

"Yes, sir."

"They were shooting promiscuously all around, and he went in?"

"Yes, sir."

Robert M. "Bob" Wright, who stood



Courtesy of the author

The Ford County, Kansas, Courthouse, in which some of the *Tarbox v. Sughrue* hearings were held, as pictured in Robert M. Wright's *Dodge City, the Cowboy Capital*, 1913.

with Hoover and Reynolds among Dodge City pioneers, likewise testified that he knew of a Masterson shooting scrape in Dodge. "A party shot his brother there, and he killed the man, and shot another one."

Finally, Bat Masterson himself responded to the charges. He denied specific allegations that he had strong-armed or threatened voters, then addressed his reputation as a "bad man."

Sughrue's attorneys, in questioning Bat, shifted away from the specifics of Bat's exploits, drawing out only his disclaimer that "I have had no [shooting] difficulty in Dodge City for five years," and that "I never considered that I was the aggressor" in any of the fights.

"NOW MR. Masterson," Sughrue's lawyers began, "several witnesses have testified, but more particularly Counsel [for Tarbox] have alluded to you as a man who has killed a man for every year of his life." The lawyer asked Masterson to answer the charge.

"There is no truth in it," Masterson replied.

Sughrue's lawyer asked Masterson to elaborate. "Here's an opportunity to vindicate yourself," the lawyer told Bat. The story of his twenty-six kills, Masterson explained, was "simply a newspaper canard." He said he was not in Gunnison when the New York *Sun* reporter arrived. Instead, Bat claimed a Doctor Carroll [the *Sun* reporter called him Dr. Cochrell] took the reporter to an opera house one night "and it appears that this reporter was looking after real western characters...and [Carroll] pointed out some one in the audience and said, 'That's Bat Masterson,' and he went and published it...and it was afterwards re-published and produced all over the country."

Bat said he later met the doctor, who apologized to him for the joke he played on the reporter. Bat declared that "everybody in Dodge City knew that [the *Sun's* story of twenty-six Masterson kills] was a lie."

Sughrue's attorneys, in questioning Bat, shifted away from the specifics of Bat's exploits, drawing out only his disclaimer that "I have had no [shooting] difficulty in Dodge City for five years," and that "I never considered that I was the aggressor" in any of the fights. Bat cited the fact that he had "never been tried, at least for any of them."

Tarbox's lawyers wanted details. "Who had the reputation," they pressed Bat on cross-examination, "of being the best man at Dodge...the best man on the shoot, or anything like that?" Trying to steer the questioning back to the disputed election and away from himself, Bat countered that he knew "who had the reputation of

being the best manipulator of voters."

The opposition refused to take the bait. Instead they asked Masterson whether he and "Mysterious Dave" Mather, a gunman involved in two fatal Dodge City shootings in the past two years, did not vie for six-shooter supremacy. "No, sir," Bat answered, "I didn't know that I was classed with Dave. I never knew that I was considered a fighter."

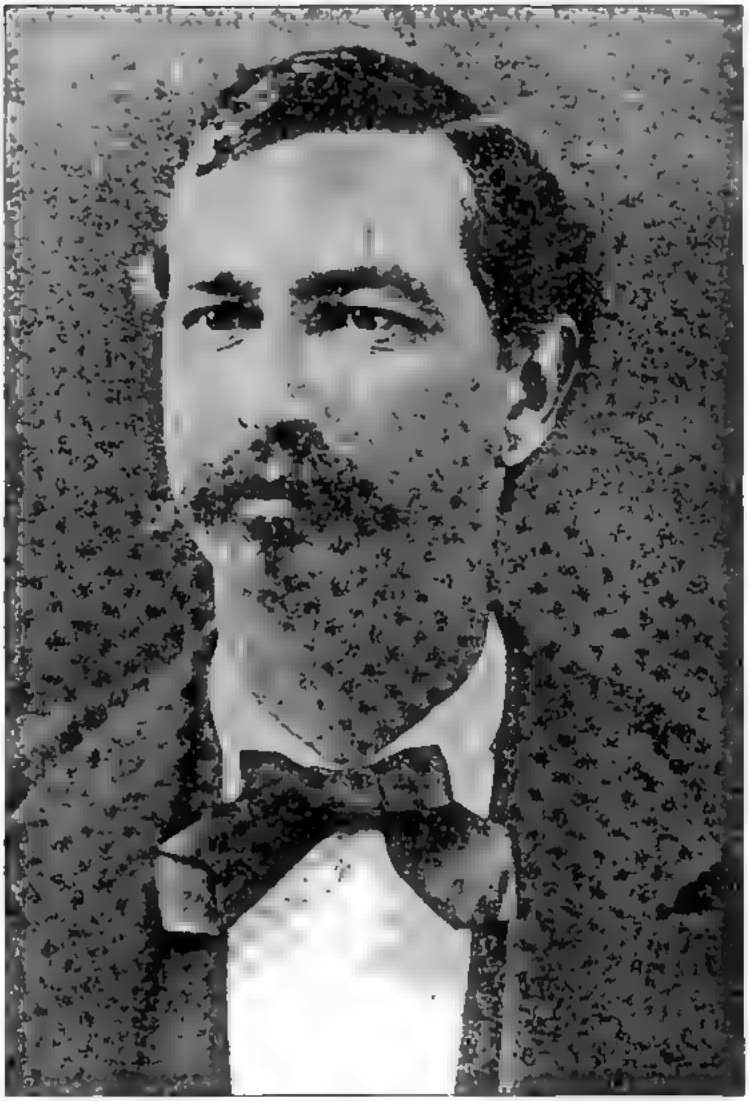
Having danced around the crucial question, Tarbox's counsel finally asked it directly. "Bat, how many men have you killed, anyway?"

"Well, that is rather a leading question," Masterson hedged.

Still tiptoeing, Tarbox's lawyer hemmed, "Oh, well, I don't care, if you don't want to..."

"I have killed a great many with kindness," Bat sparred.

Special commissioner Seabrook instructed Masterson to "answer the question, if you know."



Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas

Robert M "Bob" Wright, who testified that Bat Masterson had killed the man who shot Ed Masterson.

BAT FINALLY replied, "Two or three, I guess."

With the matter now before the court, Sughrue's lawyers felt compelled to clarify the issue during their time for redirect examination. "You have been asked about killing men in Dodge City?" one of the sheriff's lawyers asked.

"Yes, sir," Bat replied.

"Now explain how you did it, and what your provocation was?"

"I shot those parties who killed my brother there in 1878—in the spring of 1878."

"What was your brother doing at the time he was shot?"

"He was city marshal of the town."

"Was he making an arrest?"

"He was attempting to, when they murdered him."

"And they shot him dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you killed one of those, as well as shot the other?"

"Yes, sir."

"At that time, and then and there?"

"Yes, I happened to be there. I was Sheriff of the county at that time."

The Kansas Supreme Court ruled that Masterson had accidentally shoved Lee Jones when the crowd at the polling place knocked him off balance and no one had tried to intimidate voters. Tarbox failed to unseat Sughrue.

Still, the hearing revealed much about the night Ed Masterson died and, given the testimony in the case, the currently accepted story of Ed's death, based on newspaper accounts, needs revision. As the Dodge City *Times* admitted, 'The excitement was so great and the place where the shooting occurred being dark, no one hardly knew what was the matter until after the firing ceased." None of the witnesses, the *Times* continued, "saw the affair from beginning to end."

Bat gave his unadorned statement, "I shot those parties who killed my brother," under circumstances dictating that he deny participation in any gunplay for which he was not responsible. Three of Dodge City's most reputable citizens confirmed his story. In a hearing in which his character and veracity stood at issue, none of the many Dodge City residents who had lived in town in 1878 contradicted Bat's version. Those witnesses included both newspaper editors of the *Times* and *Globe* when Ed died.

PREOCCUPIED with the details of Ed's funeral on April 10, Bat left Dodge City on April 11 to console their grieving parents at Wichita. He did not return to Dodge City until after the last newspaper account of Ed's death had been published; consequently, he had no opportunity to tell reporters his version of the incident.

The Ed Masterson story illustrates the limitations of newspaper articles as historical evidence. Though the papers are indispensable in writing western history (especially when they reprint lengthy court testimony or letters of participants), like all other sources they must be scrutinized and used with caution. Common sense and experience indicate that newspapers are not wholly reliable. Newspapers contain misinformation, garbled accounts, baseless rumors, and sometimes nothing at all about events verifiable in other sources, such as court records. Eight years after Ed Masterson's death, when Bat told the Kansas Supreme Court, "I shot those parties who killed my brother," most likely he was telling the simple truth.

Wyatt Earp
Legendary American

By Glenn G. Boyer

Part 3: The Way West

On May 12, 1864 the Nick Earp family, accompanied by others from Pella, Iowa, embarked by wagon for Southern California. Let the diary of Mrs. James A. Rousseau describe the first couple of days:

> *Friday 13th:* The Pella Company reached Knoxville today about two o'clock, it is quite warm.

Knoxville was the county seat of Marion County, about thirteen miles west of Pella. The travelers' euphoria early in the undertaking is apparent:

> *Monday, May 16th:* Got up and prepared breakfast. After eating all confusion getting ready to start. I can't describe the appearance of all things as they really are. But the weather is indeed beautiful. All nature seems smiling. The birds singing their lively song of praise unto Most High God We started and went through Sandyville, then as far as the lower River, about ten miles from pleasantville. So here we have camped for the night. Just done eating supper and getting ready for bed. The girls are talking of fishing some tonight. Elizabeth and Mattie have been riding horseback most of the day. John has been riding his mare most of the time and Albert most of his.

Elizabeth, John, and Albert were the writer's children. Mattie seems to have been accompanying the family, but not as an employee.

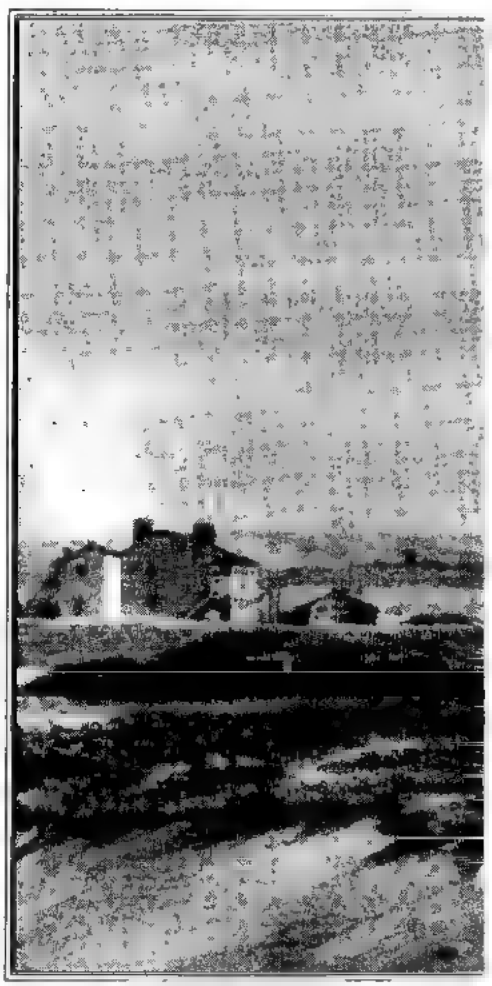
The next day's entry reveals some of the vexations of the trail that, in later months, would not be so patiently borne by the others, who became prone to go on and leave the hard luck party to their fate. Growing selfishness and hardening as time passed on the trail was common among emigrants. It was a significant cause, perhaps the principal cause, of disasters on the trail.

> *Tuesday, May 17th:* We did not get off this morning as I thought we should. We were detained on account of Jesse Curtis's cow running off. I hope he will be here tonight. Jesse has come. Could not find his cow and now one of the horses has run off. Tom has started after her. He had to go to the other side of Pleasantville about one mile before he got her. Some man saw her and put her in a stable.

Later in the journey the men encountered along the trail were not so apt to be honest and obliging.

Considering that the Earps were just another unremarkable family when they made the trek west, it is surprising that three different sources offer detailed records of the trip, the above the freshest of them since it was recorded each day as they went. Shortly after the Earp party reached California, Nick Earp sent back a long, detailed letter to a friend in Pella, the father of Charlie Copla, who made the journey in Nick's employ, at least nominally. The least reliable account is the autobiography of Wyatt Earp, since it was written sixty-two years after the fact and, moreover, was meddled with to an unknown degree by others with various axes to grind. The meddlers, at minimum, were Wyatt's wife, Josephine; John H. Flood, Jr.; and silent screen star William S. Hart, who planned to make a movie based on the manuscript, or book if one were published.

What appears here is from those three sources, amplified so far as editorial comments are concerned by inquiries that verified or disproved (usually the latter) various assertions. Stuart Lake's book, *Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal*, with its genesis in Wyatt's autobiography is less reliable than the



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three primary sources. Beyond the story's being tampered with by others—it was actually written by Flood from Wyatt's remarks—Lake pumped the whole thing up for salability. The inaccuracies in that account of the period will be noted, since many readers have heretofore been misled by Lake and may be inclined to cling to his fiction.

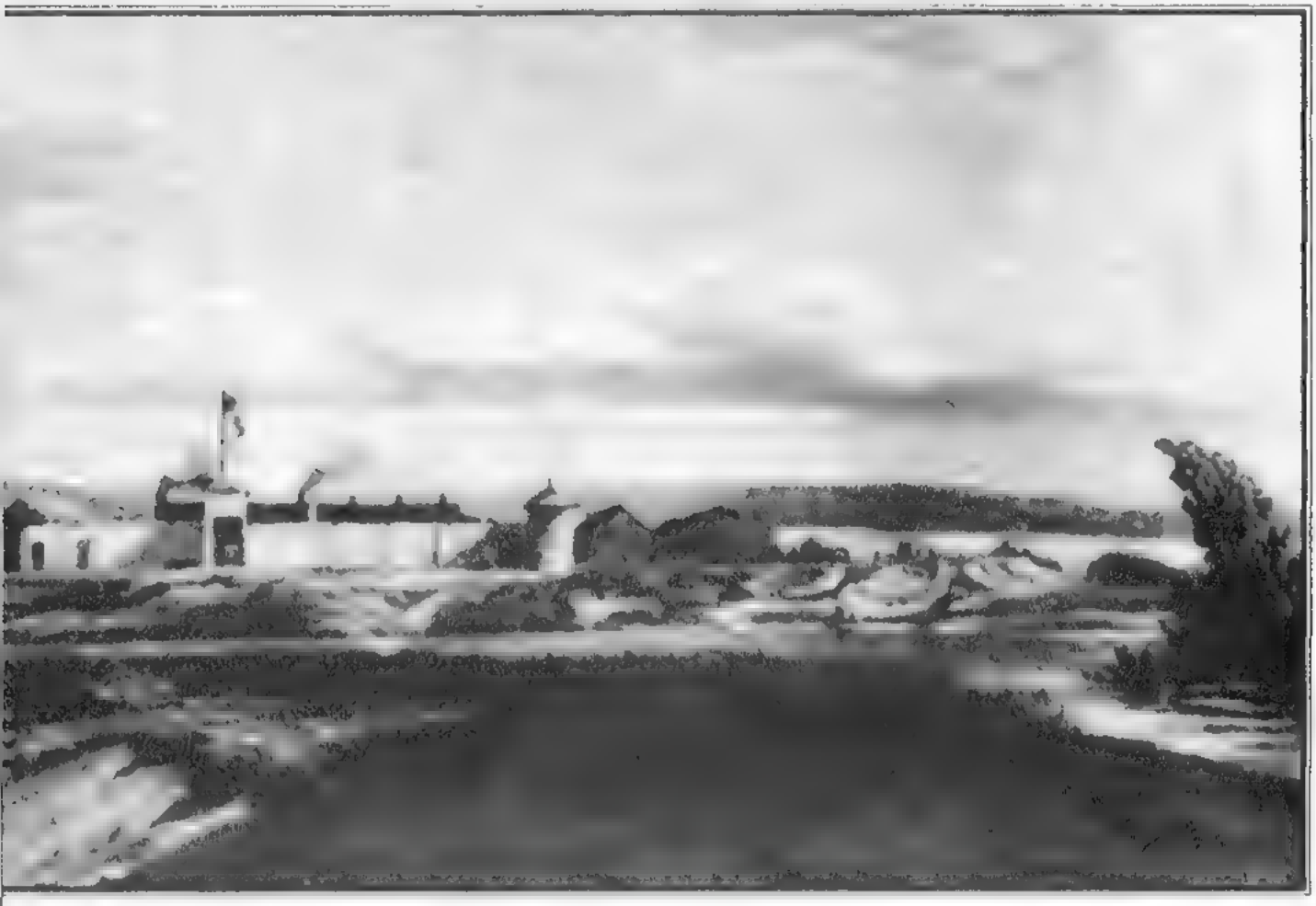
Ginnie Ann Earp's feelings about this exodus have not come down to us, which is a pity. Few women ever urged their men folks to pull up stakes from a secure home of many years, deserting friends and many precious possessions too bulky to carry along, to embark on the uncertainties of the trail west. Nick's brother, Renz, every bit as much a Southerner born and bred as Nick, managed to remain serenely in Iowa his whole life. Renz, however, did not have a big mouth and uncontrollable temper to make his locale too hot to live in. Nick Earp had little choice but to leave Pella. Being run out of town was to be a lifelong Earp affliction, for both Nick and his boys.

Wyatt had just turned sixteen the preceding March 19. Brothers Morg and Warren were thirteen and nine respectively. All madly ran their horses like Indians. Endowed with Nick's unrestrainable temperament, they had been elated for months by the prospect of Indians and buffalo, and they were totally wild in the initial days of the trip. (Except when Ginnie Ann collared them to help with three-year-old Adelia or to do chores.) Nick, as captain of the train, did little to restrain any of the kids who were constantly galloping horses around and through the wagons. He liked that in kids, whether it spooked the cold-blooded draft horses or not. Plugs needed a little stirring up for their health; so did their drivers. Other more important breaches of discipline later would irritate him to a killing rage, however.

By sheer luck the Earp train escaped the greatest threat to destruction on the trail—the great Sioux uprising of 1864. By the time those masters of pony warfare scourged the plains, allied with the Cheyennes and Arapahos, the Earp train was beyond their main range and had only a couple of brushes with Indians on horse stealing raids.

According to Jesse Curtis, great-grandson of one of the party, who wrote the introduction to the Rousseau Diary in 1945, the train from Pella consisted of only four families: the Earps, the Rousseaus, the Hamiltons and the Curtises. By contrast, Stuart Lake's description of the cavalcade depicted it as more like an army supply train. Curtis named thirty people in the four families and stated that three children were born on the trip. Mrs. Rousseau mentioned that after they made their first night's camp, seven more wagons straggled in late. At most there were a dozen wagons, contrary to Lake's cavalcade of forty, plus five hundred head of stock.

When the first leg of the journey



Courtesy of the author

Fort Laramie as it appeared when the Earp wagon train passed in 1864.

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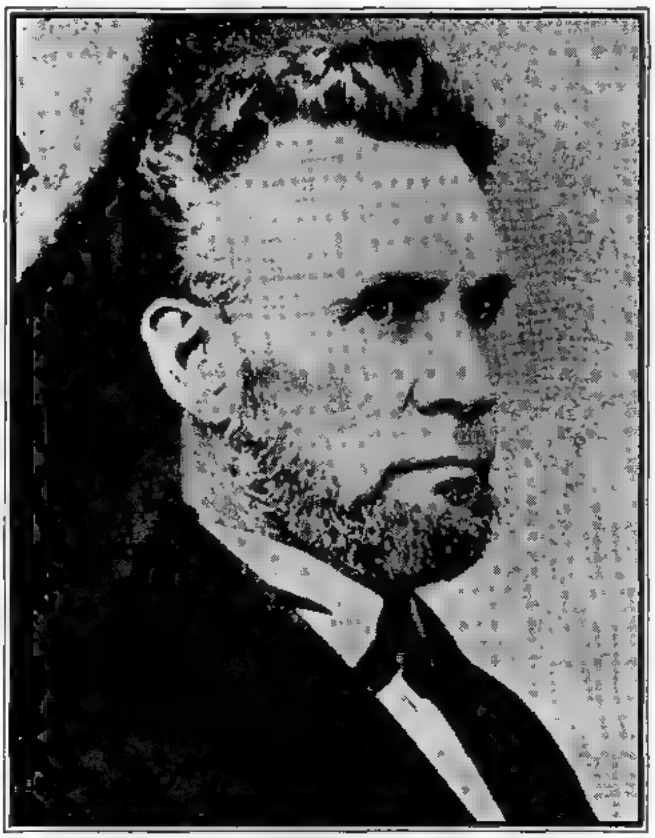


City of San Bernardino Historical and Pioneer Society

The Rev. Israel C. Curtis, who refused to give the Rousseaus the barley that would have kept the horse alive.

closed at Council Bluffs, they had made 163 miles, an average of about twelve miles a day—tolerable speed considering the roads. The party's first major mishap occurred as they crossed the Missouri River. Nick Earp laconically reported, "Just before we got to the River at the crossing place little Allen Curtis fell from the mule waggon and it ran over him and came verry near killing him but we crossed over the river and the boy got well...." Diaries of plains crossings show this kind of accident was common. Parents were too busy and tired to supervise children.

Mrs. Rousseau's diary entry when they crossed the Missouri River is revealing of how they felt about leaving a locale inhospitable to their Southern sympathies. "We laughed to see them shake the dust of Iowa from off their feet, and getting from under the dominion of Bill Stone." (Stone was Iowa's governor and had been a Union brigadier general before being elected governor.)

What was Wyatt doing through all this? Riding around on his pony like the Rousseau kids, followed by his brothers, when he wasn't fetching wood and water; or baby sitting Adelia if he couldn't get out of it; even driving a wagon occasionally, spelling Nick or older brother Jim, who was with them, or Charlie Copla. Not very heroic, but fact.

At Omaha where *Frontier Marshal* placed them sixteen days earlier, Wyatt did not witness his first gunfight, as Lake reported. The records—coroner's reports, interments in cemeteries, newspapers—are complete enough to prove that; no one was killed in a gunfight, or any other way, at any time close to the Earps' Omaha passage (May 27–June 3, 1864). Nor did Wyatt mention any such thing in his autobiography. Mrs. Rousseau did comment that the girls went in and had their pictures taken.

On Sunday, June 5, Nick paid the penalty for breaking the Sabbath in moving the train and had an encounter, as a result, with a desperate character of the weaker sex, whom Mrs. Rousseau reported as appearing to be "low Dutch or Irish." Nick spotted some good grass at the woman's place and asked her if they could graze their stock there. Mrs. Rousseau reported, "Mr. Earp said she cussed him like everything." Mrs. Rousseau concluded, "Went about a half a mile to the North Bend of the Platt River where we stopped for the night, a very pretty camping place, pleasant evening rather cool. Went 22 miles today."

Mrs. Rousseau wrote lyrically about almost everything between Omaha and Ft. Laramie: rivers, birds, grass, thunderstorms, wind, distances traveled, Indians (half-naked), Mr. Earp's being sick, etc. On June 6 they encountered a common plains phenomenon, a begging Indian. This one was a Pawnee. He wanted soap and matches; one wonders what he wanted the soap for. On June 7 they encountered quicksand for the first time. More Indians were hanging around Her husband was sick. Adding to the terror of possibly being left alone and pregnant on the trail—though proper ladies never mentioned pregnancies then—the group began to encounter the prevalent graves commented on by every plains traveler. Diaries of early travelers are full of grave counts per mile. The numbers were startling. By 1864 most of the earlier graves had been obliterated by time

THEY PASSED A windmill on June 13. Windmills were invented only ten years before and had been in quantity production for only two years. This was surely one of the earliest windmills that far west. The previous day they'd eaten their first buffalo meat and found it nice and tender. The fourteenth a sick horse delayed the Rousseau's departure. This points up another grim reality of wagon travel. The death of a horse could be critical. The balance of the draft animals had to pull all the harder, were weakened as a result, and might also fall by the wayside, especially when subsisting only on grass. Careful management was necessary; usually a lot more careful than was forthcoming.

Professional freighters, who were used to crossing the plains, did not suffer the heartbreaking rate of animal loss that the green argonauts did. It must be said in Nick Earp's favor that if the members of his train had paid more attention to his counsel in that respect, they would have fared a lot better. Most of them used horses at

"Mr. Earp went out to see about the guards and found they had got up a dance. And he told them they must quit their dancing and be on duty. One of the soldiers told him to mind his own business and ordered him off. It made him awful mad and he was for killing. He used very profane language; he could hardly be appeased."

home but did not really understand their limitations unless they had been farmers.

On June 18, the Pella party entered Sioux Indian country. Mrs. Rousseau wrote that they felt afraid to be out of sight of the train. She did not seem to realize that many people were killed in plain sight of trains, and some right in them.

On June 27 she mentioned first using buffalo chips for fuel. The day before she had been shocked to see so many graves. By then she also had mentioned a murdered body discovered by Nick Earp, a drowning, and an eighteen-year-old boy killed by a horse stampede.

On July 7 they reached Fort Laramie, which was a main division point on the road west, both mentally and geographically. It was a place where travelers heaved a sigh of relief because cholera, dread killer in those days, had almost never been encountered west of Fort Laramie.

IN AN ARGUMENT with men the military provided to guard the animals, Nick Earp first showed up as the grim chieftain he could be. Mrs. Rousseau wrote, "We have to keep close watch day and night over the stock....Mr. Earp went out to see about the guards and found they had got up a dance. And he told them they must quit their dancing and be on duty. One of the soldiers told him to mind his own business and ordered him off. It made him awful mad and he was for killing. He used very profane language; he could hardly be appeased. But he cooled down after awhile and all was quiet."

It is not hard to believe that if it were not for the inconvenient possibility of being caught, Nick would have picked off the offender from ambush later that night. His example was absorbed by his boys. Years later, a witness to the famous gunfight in Tombstone between the Earps and the Cowboys testified that just before the shooting erupted Wyatt said, "You sons of bitches have been looking for a fight; now you can have it!"

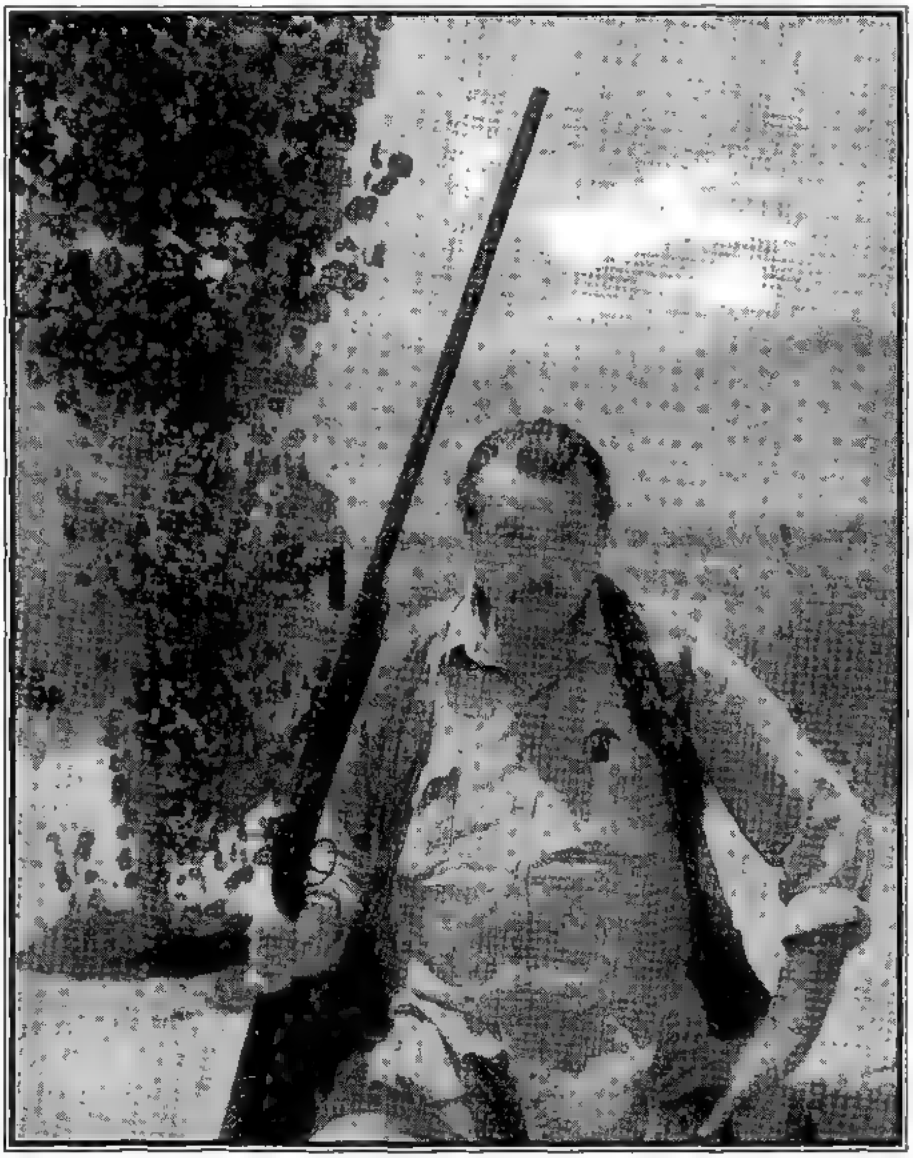
What else was Wyatt Earp learning on this trip? For one thing he learned to close herd livestock so they would not be run off by Indians, and he was shortly to learn about the use of guns for survival. In his fictitious biography, Stuart Lake armed Wyatt with an over-and-under shotgun and rifle. (Later Lake was to give him a pistol with a twelve-inch barrel, now famous as a Buntline Special. Inventing unique firearms, as needed, was a Lake specialty.)

WYATT'S GUN at this time was a twelve-gauge, muzzle-loading, percussion cap shotgun, a weapon he treasured all his life and finally gave to his nephew, Bill Miller. He did a lot of bag hunting with it on this trip, providing birds for Ginnie Ann. This is not to say he didn't use a borrowed rifle when the occasion required, or even a Colt pistol—Nick wasn't squeamish about placing firearms in his boys' possession, after thoroughly instructing them in their safe use; he did so from the time they could first hold one up and aim it.

For the first time, Wyatt was about to profit from his experience with firearms. The Flood manuscript (i.e., Wyatt's de facto autobiography) reports him with a rifle on this occasion. Nick Earp's letter to James Copla back in Pella tells the story.

April 2, 1865

...we got to ft. Laramie...on the seventh day of July just one month and seven days from the time we crossed the Missouri River and on we went without any serious trouble occassionally passing indions on the rout untell we got about 50 miles above larimie



Courtesy of the author

Author Glenn G. Boyer with the .12 gauge, muzzleloading, percussion cap shotgun Wyatt used on his family's 1864 trip from Pella to San Bernardino. Its ramrod missing, the weapon was given to Boyer by Wyatt's nephew, Bill Miller.

when we got to larimie we began to hear of depredations being comited by the Indians on trains but we not seeing any of it and it was reported always behind or before us and as we did not see any of the occurances the crew began to think it was all falce and as they had bin pretty mutch all the way or at lest some of them a little to slack in doing their duty when in camp in garding the stock they began to be still more so; untell I began to scold some about it and told them that we would have to have a demonstration from the Indians which I belived would take place before long and I would not care mutch if we did so they did not hurt any of us as I thought it would cause of them being more prompt in doing thir duty and cause them to see the necesity of more care & vigilance and sure enough when abut 50 mile above larimie one day when in camp for noon in the bend of Platt River the grass being verry pore on the side we war campt on I rode across the river and found that on the other side that thare was good grass so I gave the order for the stock to be turned over the River My hands [Wyatt and Jim Earp and Charlie Copla] took my horses and all the cattle over the ballance turned some of thirn over sutch as they could drive over after the rest but some would not go over and some said they would rather thirn would stay on the side they war on than to put them into the River So thare was some of the stock on one side and some on the other—I gave orders to those that went across the river that in case that I gave the alarm to git hold of thir horses picket rops as quick as possible and bring them across the river into camp So we had bin in camp but a little while J.B. Hamilton I.C. Curtis Dr. Rusaw & my self war seated on the bank of the River talking and I happened to look around behind me and about four hundred yards off I saw a squad of men on horseback galoping towards us I sprang to my feet and sang out Indians to arms boys and we all rushed to

Courtesy of Fred Holladay

Earp wagon train member Jesse Curtis, whose "cow ran off" May 17, 1864.

the waggons and got our horses that war on our side of the river hooping and yelling like indians sure anough we met them and began to shoot at them and we soon checked them up and turned them back while one of them was in the act of trying to lasoe one of Hamiltons mares I leveled the rifle I got at Grafe at him and at the crack of the gun he fell forward in his Saddle and turned his horse round and ran off badly wounded I am shure but the yells of the Savages and the firing of the guns fritened our horses so that it caused them to stampede and run down past the camp in spite of all that we could do they took down the road The Indians seeing that ran around and got in between us and the horses and ran off At the com mencement of the fun according to direction I hollowed for the stock on the other side to be brought over as soon as it could be got over I took ten men and persued them untell dark but without effect The conciquence was they got ten head of our horses 5 of Hamiltons 4 of Rusaws & one of Curtuses..."

Mrs. Rousseau's version is more poignant:

> We had hardly got our horses out to eat when the alarm was given the indians were on us, every man was for his gun and revolver and try and catch their horses as there was a regular stampede all running in every direction....The Indians made a rush by on the bluffs, our men firing on them as they passed. Oh what an exciting time, the bullets flying in every direction & horses running as hard as they could. I was left alone in the carriage, the rest of them all helping. It is impossible to describe my feeling at such a time and place in the situation I was Helpless. [She was pregnant.] They run four of our horses off and five of Mr. Hamilton's and a phily belonging to Mr. Curtis....Here we are in a wilderness several hundred miles from civilization not enough teams to go on with, and don't know how long it may be before the rest of them may be taken. Oh how desolate my feeling under such circumstances. We will have to try to make some arrangement to go on. I think it likely we can get two yoke of oxen to put on our big waggon and get a driver and let the horses go as we think it very unlikely we shall ever get to see them if we should go after them.

The next day, Wednesday, July 13, she comments, dolefully, "Instead of our four pretty horses we have 2 yoke of oxen, which we were glad to get so that we could proceed on our journey. We traveled about 10 miles today. (567 miles)."

That noon they put the stock out, this time with ample willing guards, as Nick had predicted they would be after they once got attacked and suffered some loss. A second attack was in the making.

It is instructive to contrast the above accounts by Nick a few months after the fact, Mrs. Rousseau's practically as it was happening, and Wyatt's as told sixty-two years later to John Flood, embellished by Flood and others to achieve what they conceived to be the drama necessary to sell and,

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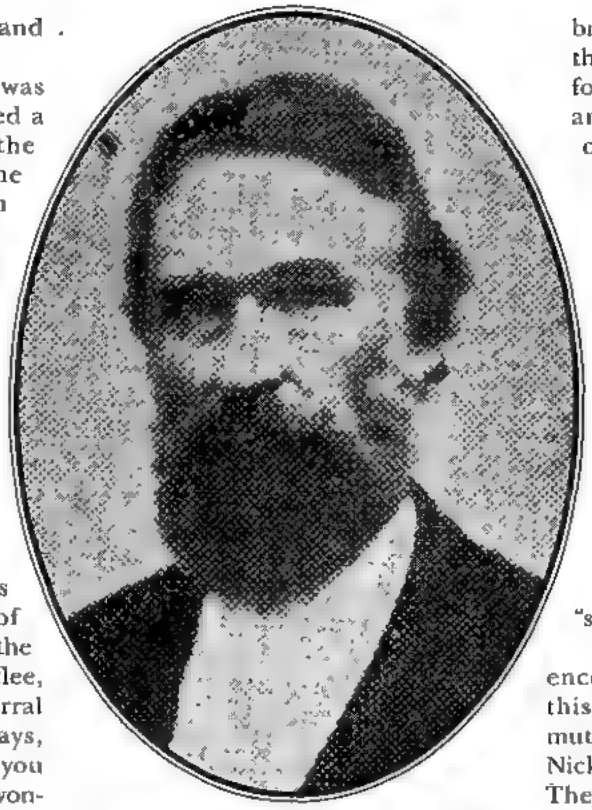
finally, Lake's superlative licks and polishes, which really did sell.

According to Flood, Wyatt was almost dozing off when he spotted a dozen Indians sneaking down the river channel, out of sight of the unsuspecting camp full of women and children. Wyatt is about to shoot the leader when Copla restrains him. Impatiently Wyatt pulls away, and, his aim spoiled, fires in the air to warn the camp. All hell breaks loose, pandemonium reigns, one woman spilling cooking grease into the fire and causing a huge blaze, others screaming, running to shelter, kids wildly flying about. Meanwhile, Wyatt rounds up the horses and oxen and stampedes the animals (all five hundred of them?) across the river and over the hapless Indians, who ultimately flee, while Wyatt and Copla calmly corral the animals in camp. Wyatt says, "Hell, Copely! [sic] What made you spoil the shot? I certainly had a wonderful aim." (Pure Flood.)

Lake betters this with five hundred charging oxen and horses stampeding the Indians, Wyatt driving the herd before him. (Recall Nick mentioned so few animals that his men could lead them all by their picket ropes.) Afterward, along with the other men, Wyatt pursued and got a shot at (what else?) a chief, but the range was too great for his gun. Meanwhile, brave thirteen-year-old Morgan was holding the Earp horses, and Ginnie Ann her Thoroughbred colt, right in the path of the charging Indians.

Nick's account of the second Indian raid is almost as dramatic (and suspect) as Lake's, but not nearly as instructive as Mrs. Rousseau's, which follows:

> The [livestock] had not been out over a couple of hours, when the alarm was given the indians were on us. Our men were prepared to follow them. They came as before full speed to stampede our horses, but we were ready and headed them. [Nick had been right—a scare was needed to make them as alert as they should have been in the first place.] But still they appeared determined to make a rush on us by circling around a little. several of the men by this time caught a horse and took their guns and followed after them at full speed firing at them as they went. One of the men in our company was a little ahead of the rest. And in the attempt of firing at the indians killed his own horse from under him which left him to the mercy of the enemy. Luckily our men were close to hand and saved him from the dreadful fate that awaited him. The Indians turned on them and they had a regular fight, they shot their bows and arrows, the men brought 2 of them [arrows] back with them. The doctor [Mrs. Rousseau's husband] was one of the men that went on horseback after them he recognized one of the Indians we bought some Elkskins from, and which appeared the most friendly kind. But they are treacherous. He also saw a white man that he saw the other side of Laramie and wanted to trade horses with him Charlie being some lame, he said he wouldn't be able to carry him through. The dr. the instant he saw him told the men to shoot him as he was a white man. He heard him he supposed as he made a quick move to get out of the way.. .The Sioux Indian displays a great deal of daring and bravery. They make a dash among the whites seemingly not caring for anything, stampede the horses and take them off. When they came this time two of the women came and gave us their babies to take care of, they screaming poor little things as loud as they could yell. The women having to run and catch the horses while the men are keeping the indians off. It is indeed an exciting time and still I can't account for my feelings. I sit in the waggon and see all that is going on and it don't appear to move me



Courtesy of Fred Holladay

James Rousseau, whose wife kept a revealing diary of the trek west.

As the military would put it, "she'd been blooded."

The most dangerous thing encountered during the balance of this exodus—the disintegration of mutual support—is apparent in both Nick's and Mrs. Rousseau's accounts. The prevalent disposition became a case of each family for itself, dog eat dog, a paralyzing, pervasive fear of not making it down the home stretch seeming to grip them. Despite that, the details of daily progress are much the same as during the earlier phases.

One of Lake's fabricated incidents illustrates his genius as the master myth maker who made Wyatt Earp famous. He has the boy fishing every day for two weeks with the famous Jim Bridger at the fort that bears his name. Actually the old mountain man had not held a proprietary interest in Fort Bridger for many years. Lake recounts how Nick, on his earlier trek west, (when he was flatboating on the Des Moines River?) had become a friend of Bridger's. Both David Lavender's biography of Bridger, and Eugene F. Ware's *Sioux War of 1864*, make it plain that Bridger had just returned to Fort Laramie, which was far back on their trail by then, after guiding a party up the Bozeman Trail. Moreover, rather than spending two weeks at Fort Bridger, Mrs. Rousseau says they reached the outpost on August 12 and left the following day.

Admittedly this has not been overly instructive about Wyatt Earp, the man, but it is illuminating regarding the Wyatt Earp Myth—and how it grew.

Next Month: Family Amnesia

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The Wagon Box Fight

By John A. DeMay

August 2, 1867, began as just another day on post duty in northeastern Wyoming for Private (and acting lance corporal) Sam Gibson and his comrades in Company C of the Twenty-seventh Infantry. Before the morning was over, however, they would be embroiled in one of the classic battles of the Indian Wars—the Wagon Box Fight.

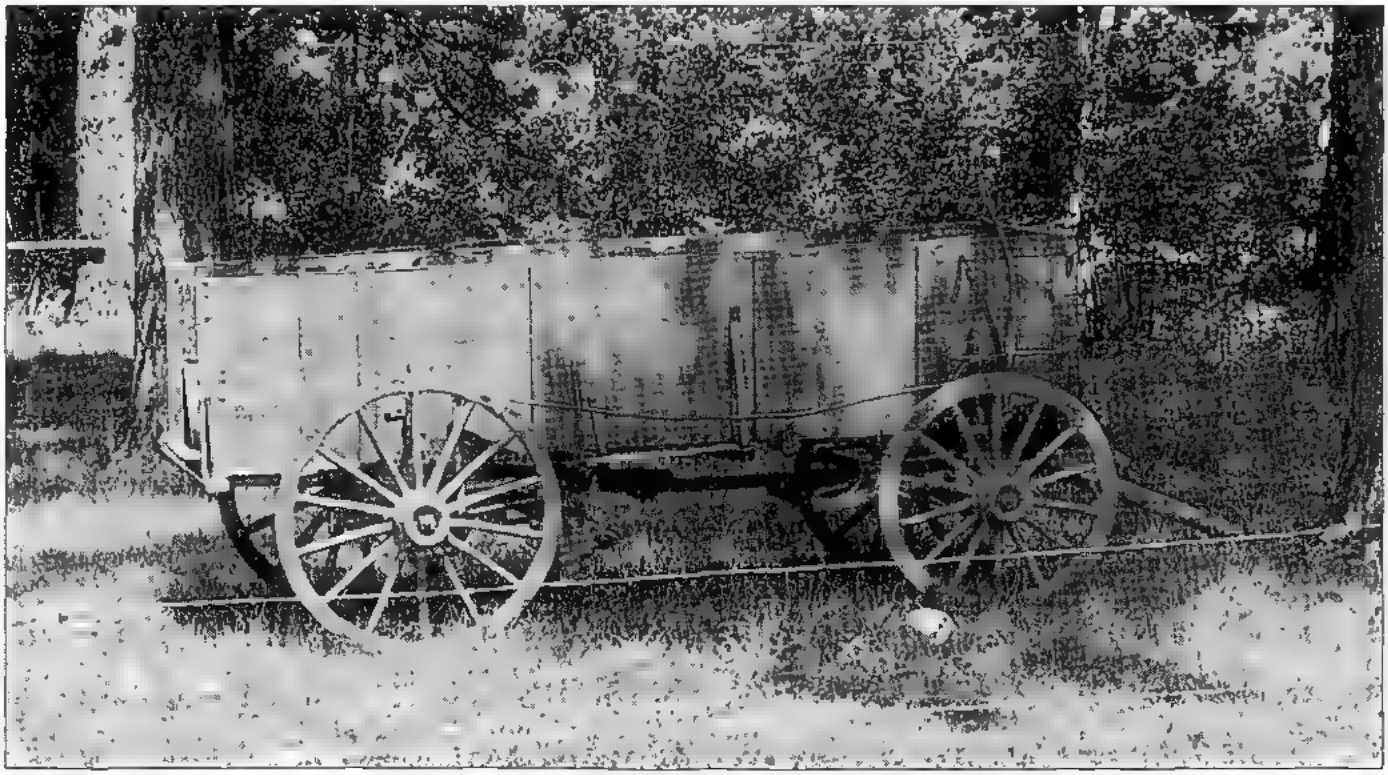
The day was already hot and sultry by 6:45 A.M. Gibson strode across the prairie on his way to a picket post along Little Piney Creek about 400 yards from his unit's main camp. Somewhere off to his right Captain James Powell, Company C's commander, was bathing in that same pretty stream.

At the post Gibson greeted Privates Nolan Deming and John Garrett, who would share picket duty with him, then scanned the terrain for Indians. About 700 yards east he saw the Sullivant Hills—a long, narrow range that extended back three miles to Fort Phil Kearny. A wagon road ran along its barren crest from the fort, descended to the prairie, turned right and headed north, past the soldiers' camp and on for another mile to the "upper pinery." To the south the level prairie extended for a mile to the "lower pinery," and to the west a broader prairie led to a high, rounded hill. Gibson saw no Indians. Satisfied that all was well, he built a lean-to from his poncho and some willow sticks, under which Garrett and Deming promptly sought refuge from the sun.

Even at the early hour, the upper and lower pineries buzzed with activity as teamsters hitched up their mule teams and woodsmen felled the tall pine trees. Because Fort Phil Kearny depended on wood for construction and heating, cutting and transporting wood to the fort was a daily job. Unfortunately the nearest prime stands of timber were five miles from the fort in the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains, and the woodcutters and teamsters working there endured persistent Indian raids.

THE SIOUX, under chief Red Cloud, and the Cheyennes hated Fort Phil Kearny and the Bozeman Trail it protected. They staged frequent attacks in the area, harassing Fort Phil Kearny from its inception. They used the three-mile length of the Sullivant Hills as an observation post and staging-point for attacks on the fort, its herd, wood trains, loggers at the pineries, and any group wandering in between.

The woodcutters and haulers needed protection, so the army established a "strong point" on the prairie about four miles from the fort in a position that allowed soldiers to observe both pineries and a good portion of the road to and from the fort. To protect themselves on the open land the soldiers detached the wooden wagon boxes from fourteen standard quartermaster freight wagons and arranged them in an oblong circle with just enough room between for a man to pass through. At one end the boxes did not quite meet, so soldiers used two large barrels to fill the gap. Gibson estimated the size of the corral as 120-feet-long by seventy-feet-wide; Sergeant Max Littmann judged it smaller, eighty-feet by fifty-feet. The boxes were each ten-feet-long, four-and-one-half feet wide, and two-and-one-half feet high. A detachment of soldiers stayed at the corral to protect the civilian woodsmen and teamsters who actually cut and



Author's Photo

A wagon box similar to those from behind which soldiers fought during the Wagon Box Fight.

hauled the wood. Smaller units went directly to the pineries and traveled with the wood train.

Twenty-six soldiers, including Powell and Lieutenant John C. Jenness, were at the wagon-box corral when the attack began. Garrett first spotted Indians about 7:00 A.M., and Deming alerted Gibson with the shocking cry, "My God! There are thousands of them." Gibson could not believe the scene before him. Trying to describe it later he said, "The Indians seemed to rise out of the ground like a flock of birds [and] were coming across the foothills like a big swarm of bees." Nearby some small groups of Indians were already splashing across Little Piney Creek close enough that Gibson could plainly see "their bodies were painted white, green and yellow which made them look hideous in the extreme." The three soldiers started firing and running; soon a frightened herdsman running from the lower pinery joined them.

Author's Photo

Little Piney Creek.

CAPTAIN POWELL later estimated that 200 Indians had swarmed in on the mule herd and ran it off while another five hundred attacked the woodsmen and teamsters at the lower pinery. He said another 800 warriors surrounded his base camp at the start of the fighting. Powell himself had only thirty-two men; six woodcutters and teamsters, including the famed mountain man Jim Baker, had joined Powell at the corral after the attack began.

Gibson and his small group had to fight their way back to the corral as mounted Sioux tried to cut them off. Littmann, five-feet four-inches of pure nerve, helped them. He ran out from the safety of the corral almost one hundred yards and chased the Indians away as the others raced to safety.

At the corral, according to Gibson, his group found the other men "standing in groups inside and outside of the corral watching the Indians assembling around us." They observed that "many of the warriors were riding here and there chanting their war and death songs."

The sight sobered the men. Captain Powell later wrote to his wife that he never expected to see another day. Gibson gave a more melancholy description of their preparation: "About half of us pulled our shoes off after the fight started, tied the laces together and made two loops of the laces—one loop to go over our right foot and the smaller loop to fit on the trigger of our Rifle so that if the Indians ever got inside the corral we were going to stand up and after putting the small loop on the trigger, we would place the muzzle of the Rifle underneath our chins and blow our heads off before we would be captured by Red Cloud's cut-throat Sioux Indians."

After much chanting, racing around, and brandishing of spears and rifles, the Indians began their first attack. From the east, south, and west 800 mounted Sioux charged across the level plain toward the corral. The defenders spread out around the corral, some behind the wagon boxes, others in them.

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The situation on all sides was frightening and confusing as dust and rifle smoke blurred the images of the approaching Sioux. Gunfire from the corral was furious as the thirty-two men loaded, aimed, and fired as fast as their desperate hands could move.

The soldiers had one great advantage in the fight—the newly issued Springfield-Allin .50 caliber, breech-loading rifles—which they could load and fire many times faster than old muzzle loaders. The Indians did not know about the new rifles and had planned their attack around the soldiers' use of muzzle loaders. They charged to within 150 yards of the corral, then deliberately paused, waiting for the soldiers to begin reloading; they would then start their final attack. But the expected fifteen-second pause never came—instead the soldiers kept up a steady fire.

The attack was furious nonetheless, with some braves riding in close and

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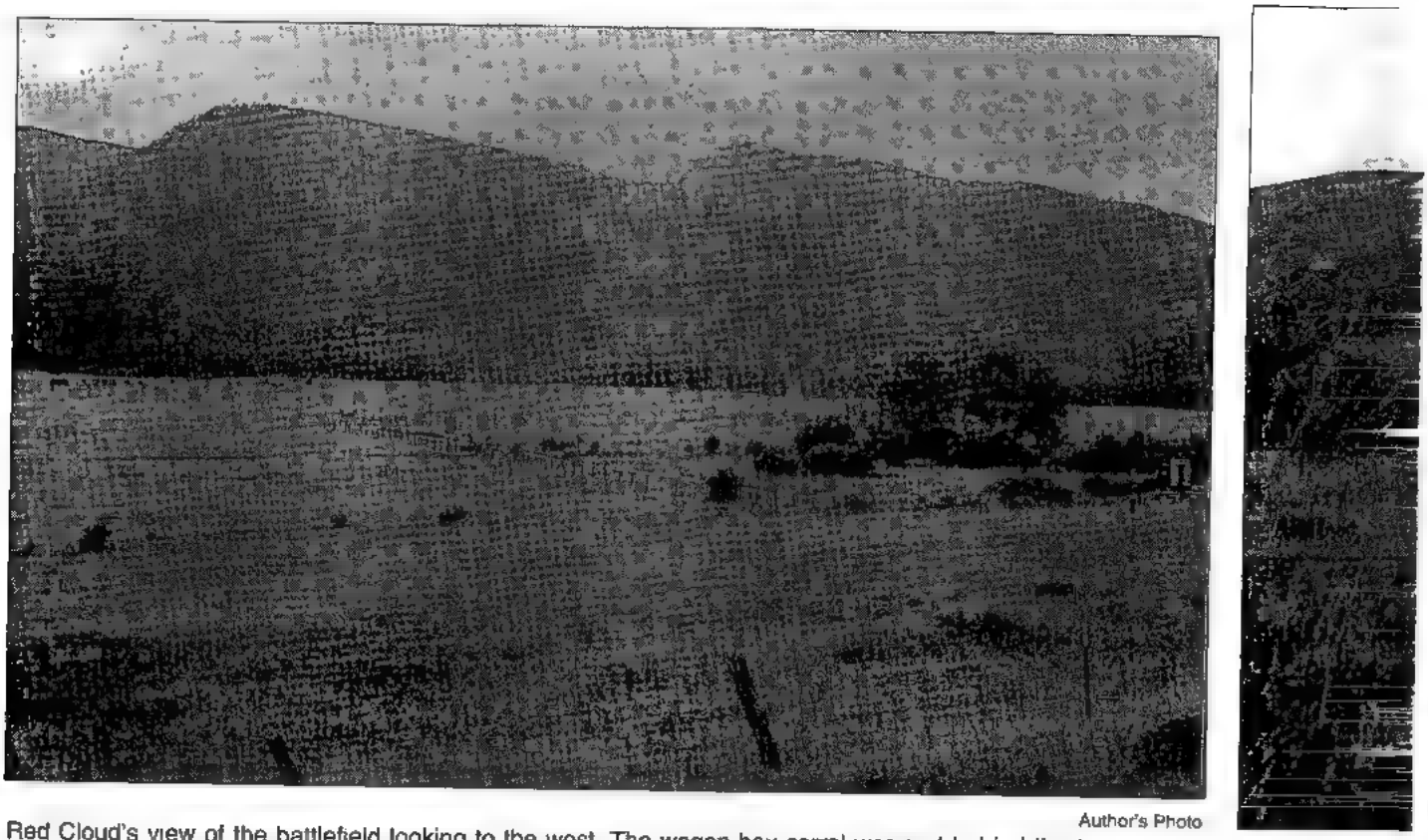


Author's Photo

Red Cloud's view of the battlefield looking to the west. The wagon-box corral was just behind the trees to the right.

throwing spears. Others approached within bow range, dropping over the sides of their horses and firing arrows under the animals' necks. Many others had rifles and shot the tops of the wagon boxes to slivers.

In the face of the continuous fusillade from thirty-two rifles the Indians broke off their attack. Some retreated back to the Sullivant Hills, while others returned to the high hill on the west edge of the plain.

A small group of chiefs gathered on a slope of the Sullivant Hills. Lieutenant Jenness, peering through binoculars, was sure he saw Red Cloud among them. The chiefs were apparently giving orders to their warriors, because Gibson said the soldiers noticed, "on the plain to the southeast a large body of Indians were signaling with pocket mirrors toward the big ridge east of us, while couriers were observed riding furiously back and forth at breakneck speed."

On the hill west of the corral a large crowd of women and children had gathered to watch the battle. Such noncombatants were rarely near a battlefield, and their presence indicates the warriors expected a major victory that day.

During the lull, long-range sniping and occasional attacks by small groups frayed the soldiers' nerves and forced them to keep their heads down. Gibson recalled the moment, saying, the soldiers had to crawl around the corral to get more ammunition, of which there was plenty, and Sergeant Frank Robertson was observed "poking aside with his head the arrows that were sticking up in the ground." Captain Powell fired "at some wounded Indians within sixty yards of the corral to the west." None of the men were in a talkative mood, and one noted that the "utter silence was uncanny." A tethered pony on the west side had suffered twelve arrow wounds and had to be shot. Then the cry went up, "Here they come again."

Seven hundred warriors, on foot from the north and west, made the second attack. The soldiers fired until their gunbarrels overheated. Jim Baker claimed that he "kept eight rifles red hot." Some Indians shot fire arrows into the corral, setting ablaze the dried manure laying about.

Seven hundred warriors, on foot from the north and west, made the second attack. The soldiers fired until their gunbarrels overheated. Jim Baker claimed that he "kept eight rifles red hot." Lieutenant Jenness on the east side and Privates Tommy Doyle and Henry Haggerty on the north side were killed in the attack. Some Indians shot fire arrows into the corral, setting ablaze the dried manure laying about. The thick, brown smoke and stench added to the soldiers' miseries.

Littmann engaged in a personal duel with a Miniconjou Sioux, later identified as Jipala. Jipala was a big man who charged forward chanting a war song. As he neared the wagons, he dove into a depression in the ground. Littmann claimed that Jipala was only thirty to fifty feet away from him and would jump up, fire an arrow, then drop down again, escaping the many bullets fired against him. The sergeant waited patiently, his eyes fixed on the spot where he had last seen the Indian. Finally Jipala got up for

Author's Photo

Red Cloud's Knoll, in the Sullivant Hills, from which he and other chiefs watched the fighting.

one more shot and Littmann killed him.

The soldiers beat the Sioux back once again

During lulls, some braves, individually and in pairs, charged recklessly around the battle area to retrieve the bodies of dead and wounded comrades. Such casualties were many. Fire Thunder, an Oglala Sioux said, "There were dead warriors and horses piled all around the boxes and scattered over the plain." The Indians' courage and feats of horsemanship drew high praise from the defending soldiers.

The soldiers became desperate for water About one hundred feet northwest of the corral sat two large camp kettles full of water intended for the morning cooking. In desperation Gibson and Grady crawled out on their bellies to reach the kettles and dragged them back to their thirsty comrades.

Directly to the north and northwest of the corral, roughly seventy-five yards, the level ground dropped off abruptly some fifteen feet to a lower plain. Some Indians had positioned themselves behind the embankment and had fired at the soldiers all morning. Most of the arrows covered with flaming pitch came from that area. To the northwest, perhaps 125 yards away, a narrow gully connected the upper plain to the lower one

Shortly after noon a loud and strange humming noise came from that direction. Several men rose to their feet to see what it was and, perplexed, had to be shouted down. The noise grew louder. One reported that the "awful humming, chanting sound grew in volume and intensity." The soldiers were mystified as to what it could be, then suddenly they knew. "We saw the naked bodies of hundreds upon hundreds of Indians swarming up a ravine about ninety yards to the west of the corral. They were all on foot, formed in the shape of a letter 'V' or wedge, and were led by Red Cloud's nephew, who wore a gorgeous war bonnet."

That was the soldiers' worst moment. They fired desperately into the mass of warriors, who were now so close "that we could see the whites of their eyes." The defenders weathered the attack only because the Indians stayed bunched up. Each .50 caliber bullet knocked down several braves, and in the crush of humanity the warriors in the middle and rear had little chance to use their weapons. Still the Indians came breathtakingly close to getting inside the corral Littmann said, "Some Indians managed to get within five or six feet of us

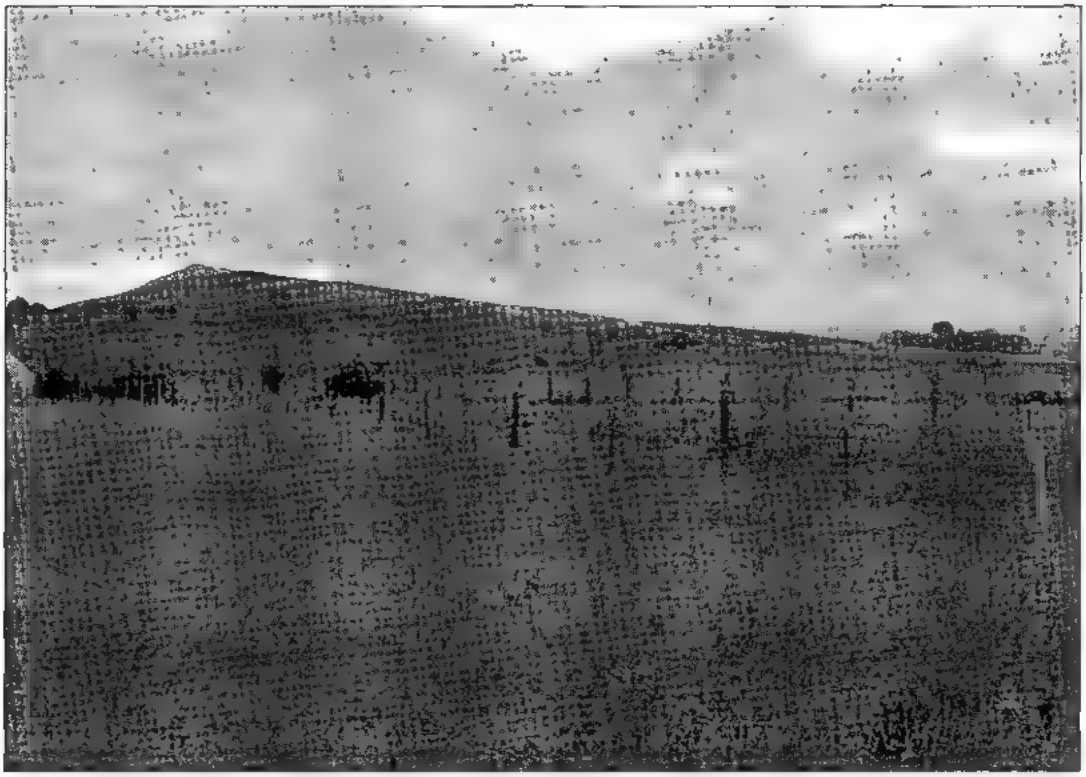
Combat Intelligence

Engagements like the Wagon Box Fight often spark debate over the particulars of the battle. One frequently disputed fact is the number of Sioux involved. Captain James Powell, an experienced Civil War veteran used to judging numbers of opposing troops in combat situations, estimated a minimum of 1,500 Sioux staged the attack. Sergeant Max Littmann estimated 3,000 Indians. Private Frederic Claus said later that an Indian told him about 2,500 Sioux were involved. Historians also vary. George Bird Grinnell says 400; Stanley Vestal and George E. Hyde say 1,000, and Cyrus T. Brady says 3,000.

The Indians clearly made three major assaults on the corral, but Sam Gibson referred to three attacks from the north on foot. Littmann claimed a total of eight attacks. Vestal speaks of four rushing charges, and Brady six. Obviously much depended on the view of the reporter, and what he considered to be an attack.

How close did the Indians get? Littmann said five or six feet, and R.J. Smyth, a civilian teamster at the corral, said they got within a few feet of the corral. Sometime after the battle Gibson returned and found six bodies within one hundred yards and the closest about fifty yards from the corral. It is entirely possible that the Indians returned on the night of August 2 or during the day of August 3 and removed the bodies of the dead.

The actual site of the Wagon Box Fight even causes some confusion. A stone memorial exists at the most generally accepted site. However, the "Littmann site" where Littmann described the fight as occurring is about 500 yards southeast of the stone marker and a large pipe in the ground identifies it. The site of the Wagon Box Fight has recently come into possession of the Fort Phil Kearny/Bozeman Trail Association and an archeological survey is planned for the area. That may help clarify the matter of the battle's location.



Author's Photo

Red Cloud's Knoll looking east from the soldiers' corral site.

before falling under the withering fire we poured into them."

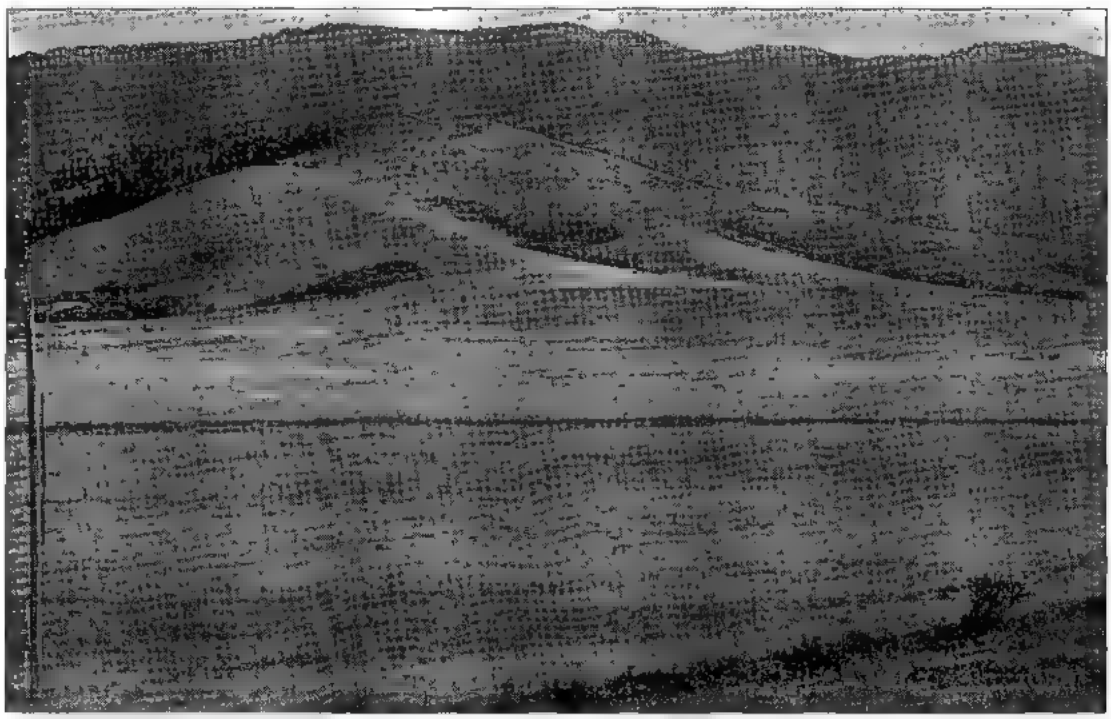
Then the Indians broke and ran. Amazingly, "The several hundred mounted Indians on the plain to the south of us, who were intently watching this footcharge, never offered to assist their red brothers by making a mounted charge but discreetly remained out of rifle range," said Gibson

Following the attack the soldiers waited—hot, sweaty, and weary, their faces begrimed with smoke. About 1:30 P.M. they saw the small group of chiefs on Sullivant Hill begin to break up and move down the hill The reason soon became apparent when they heard the boom of howitzers and the explosion of shells. Help from the fort was on its way! The relief column soon arrived and the defenders of the corral all got a big drink of whiskey Looking across the plain they saw "a long train of Indian ponies, three and four deep, and a quarter of a mile long disappearing." To the west the hill that had once been crowded with Sioux spectators was empty and silent.

The battle was over; the soldiers agreed that they could not have held on for so little as another half-hour. Their faces were so marked from rifle and manure smoke that they "looked like they had used burnt cork on their faces."

At the corral three men had been killed and two wounded. Captain Powell estimated that his men had killed sixty Indians and wounded 120; a woodcutter by the name of Porter generally agreed, estimating fifty to sixty Indians killed and 200 to 300 hundred wounded.

The soldiers could hardly believe they had survived. Littmann summed it up when he said, "Had they advanced steadily with their entire force—which could not have numbered much under 3,000 braves—the fight would not have lasted five minutes."



Author's Photo

Looking west from the corral site at the hill on which Indian women and children gathered to watch the fight.

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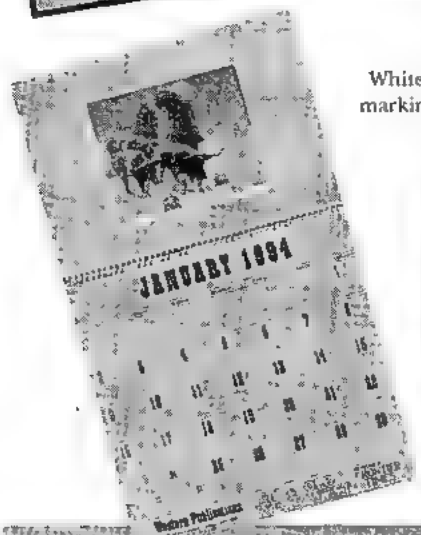

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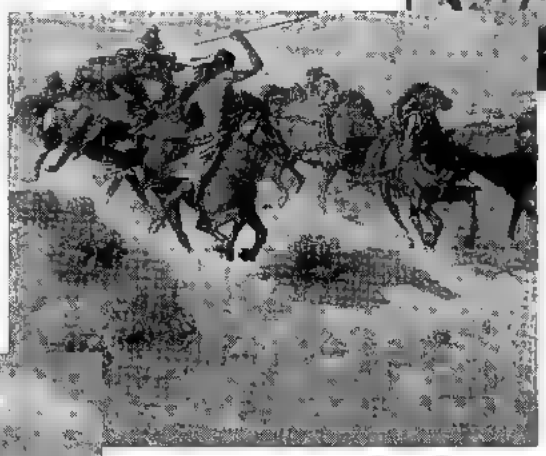

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Spanish Dam on the Pecos

By Patrick Dearen

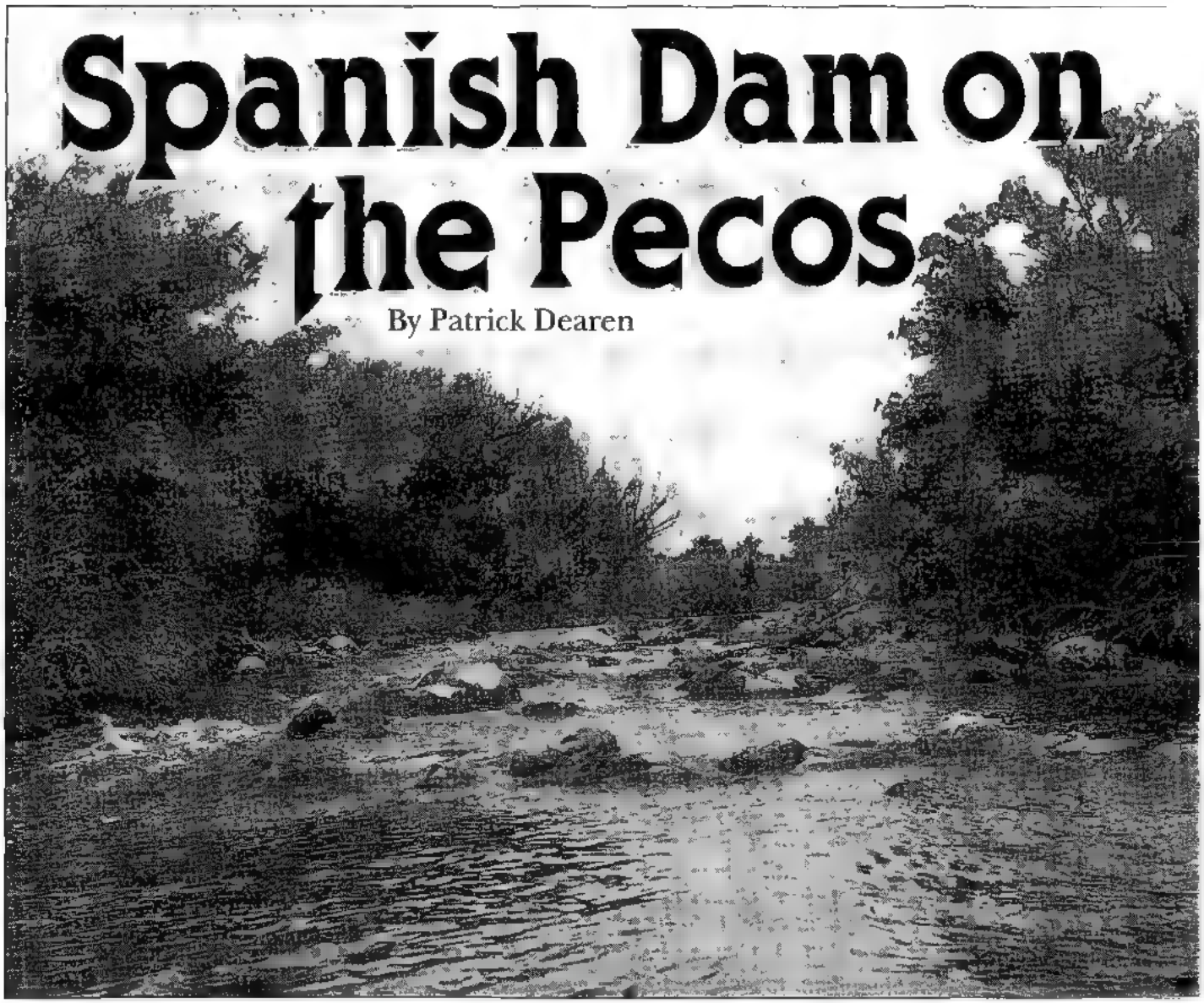
With crowbar, sledge hammer, and pioneer determination, the Torres company freed the loose limestone shielding the Great Rock and, at a point in the river opposite the hill's lower end, dumped wagon load after wagon load into a frame of logs (possibly cypress) imported from afar. [1]

Below a great rock that marked a vital ford and served as a lookout against Apaches, the rush of the Pecos River through a jumble of boulders tells a story of pioneer fortitude.

Little is left today of the so-called "Spanish Dam," fifty-five miles south of present-day Odessa in West Texas. But long before the "Blue Hole"—as locals call the impounded water—first sent a current sluicing through an ambitious, fifteen-mile canal in the 1870s, the site loomed important for peaceful Indians and, perhaps, for Spanish explorers.

The Great Rock—an isolated limestone mass seventy feet high, 700 feet long, and varying from 100 to 300 feet wide—rose suddenly out of a plain to front the Pecos, a moat-like waterway snaking through a wilderness cursed by thirst. One could have journeyed for days upstream from this unique upthrust without finding more than a knoll guarding the river's otherwise bare banks.

Situated on a fringe of the Chihuahuan Desert subject to Apache raids, the Great Rock and its immediate surroundings held several attractions for peaceful seventeenth-century Indians. Elsewhere, the Pecos coursed swift and turbid between sheer banks plagued by quicksand, but here the life-giving waters—teeming with fish, turtles, and mussels—flowed over a gravelly bed between sloping banks that allowed easy fording. Too, the 100-yard-wide flat between the river and the bluff was suitable not only for their campfires and tule huts, but for fields of corn, beans,



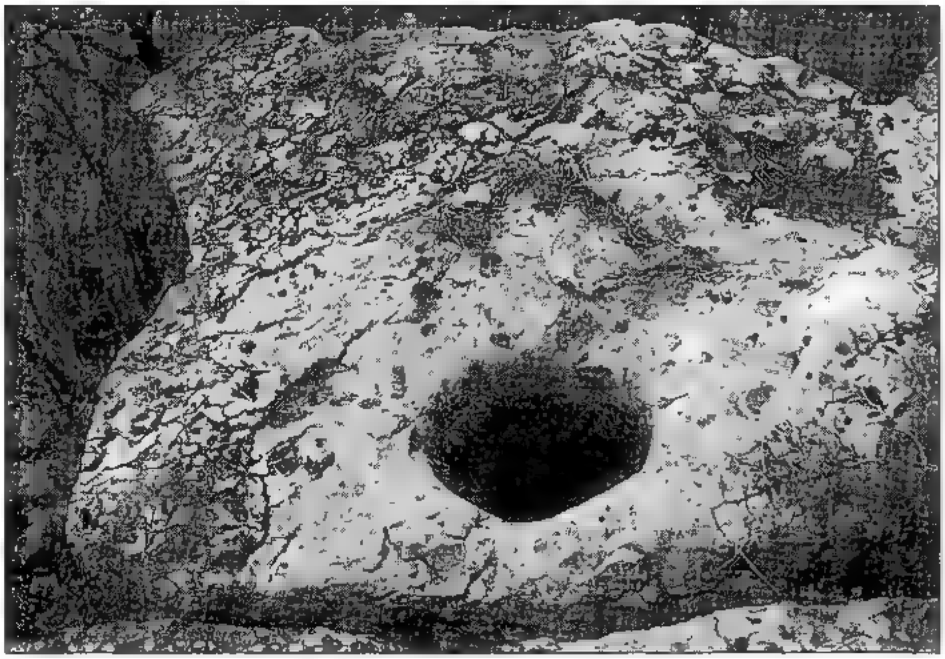
Courtesy of the Author

Spanish Dam as viewed today from downstream.

and pumpkins as well. The rocky bluff, meanwhile, proved ideal for mortar holes and sunken ovens known as mescal pits.

Considering the Apache threat, however, the Great Rock's utmost advantage may have been tactical. From its summit, a sentry could have spotted a raiding party (as well as buffalo or deer) several miles across a wasteland of scrub mesquite and creosote. In an actual attack, the steep escarpment would have been easy to defend from the dome above, where the remnants of fortifications still were evident well into the twentieth century.

"Up on this little hill there, they've got some holes and rocks so they could guard it, you know, put up battle," noted Cliff Newland (1886–1979) in a 1964 interview. He studied the site after going to work for the McElroy Ranch in neighboring Crane County in 1928



Courtesy of the Author

A grinding basin on the slopes of the Great Rock.

It was such a rancheria, bustling with activity, that the Spaniard Juan Dominguez de Mendoza and his party approached in January 1684. With soldiers, Roman Catholic priests, missionaries, and Indian guides and servants, Mendoza had set out from present-day El Paso in mid-December 1683 to confer in Central Texas with representatives of nineteen Indian nations.

THEY STRUCK the Salado, or Pecos, January 13, somewhere between the modern-day towns of Imperial and Girvin, and forged downstream on the southwest side. On January 17, as they crossed land charred by fire, Mendoza sighted what he described as a "great rock."

While historian J.W. Williams (*Old Texas Trails*) believed that topographic feature was the 365-foot prominence near the present Highway 349 river crossing, authorities such as O.W Williams and Victor J. Smith identified the "great rock" with the later site of Spanish Dam

Halting within eight leagues (2.63 miles) of the bluff, Mendoza found a contingent of Hediondos approaching. While most were on foot, a few rode horses—an indication of how quickly the animal had become vital to the tribes of the Southwest after its arrival with the Spanish.

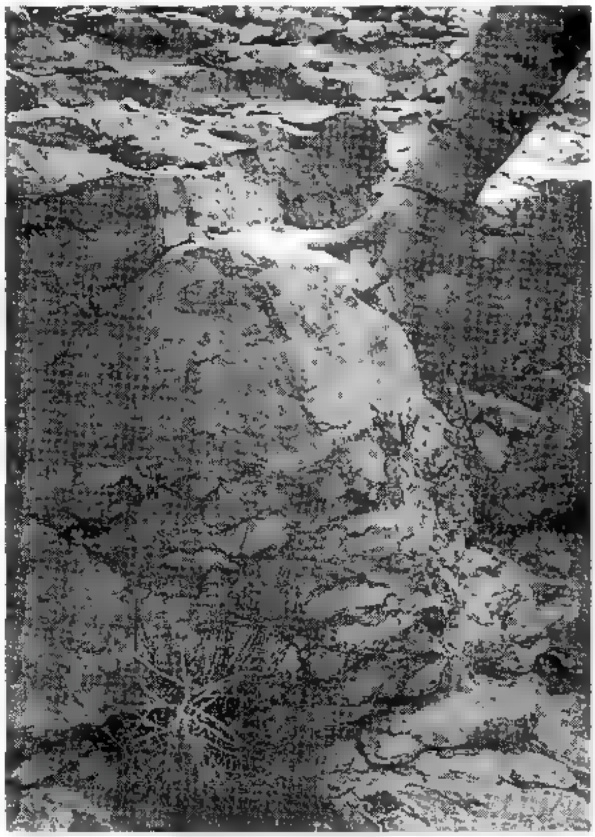
Too, the Hediondos evidently were no strangers to Spaniards and Roman Catholicism. Not only did they greet Mendoza's party with rejoicing and a salutatory volley of gunfire, but they carried a large wooden cross, painted red and yellow, and a white banner with two crosses of taffeta

Nevertheless, Mendoza took precautions against attack and allowed only the two priests to dismount. When the Hediondos merely kissed their garments, however, Mendoza and his party followed them to their rancheria, which he described in his report as lying "at the foot of a great rock that serves it as protection against the hostile Apaches."

CROSSING the Pecos to the middle of the village, the expedition encountered further jubilation, this time on the part of the women and children. Despite the outwardly warm welcome, Mendoza declined an offer of lodging and entertainment in the rancheria "because of the evil results which might follow."

On a nearby hill—chosen, he said, "according to the usage of war"—he camped seven days while "awaiting news of a great ambuscade which the enemy [the Apaches] are coming to make on them [the Hediondos] to carry off many horses."

Despite the Spanish encampment, which possibly was in the Bobcat Hills a couple of miles to the north, Apaches nevertheless swooped down by night



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Quarry marks in the rock face of the Great Rock.

The mid-1870s found emigrant wagon trains, cattle herds, and stagecoaches sending dust clouds pluming up along the Pecos and a settlement burgeoning near Fort Stockton, thirty-seven miles west-southwest of the Great Rock. Four men looked to the Great Rock and envisioned a remarkable farming project.

and, from the very shadow of the Great Rock, drove away an unspecified number of Hediondo horses. The fear of such raids—which claimed more horses than lives—prompted the Hediondo and Jumano chiefs to petition Mendoza on January 19 to "make war on the hostile Apaches, who were enemies of theirs and of the Spaniards." Mendoza, aware of the Apache threat to Spanish interests, consented.

Spain was powerful and determined, but in the desert the Apaches had few equals. Two hundred years after Mendoza's promise of warfare, Spanish occupation of Texas was only a dim memory, but Apaches still swooped in by dark to spill blood and steal horses below the Great Rock.

Provided deer skins by the Hediondos so that his soldiers "might be armed" in the war against Apaches, Mendoza soon forged eastward to disappear into history. The Hediondos, too, faded into oblivion, but the Great Rock endured.

The mid-1870s found emigrant wagon trains, cattle herds, and stagecoaches sending dust clouds pluming up along the Pecos and a settlement burgeoning near the army post of Fort Stockton, thirty-seven miles west-southwest of the Great Rock. The days of the dreaded Comanche War Trail had just ended, and though at times Apaches still jumped the reservation near present-day Ruidoso, New Mexico, to raid the area, four men looked to the Great Rock and envisioned a remarkable farming project.

Prodded by the Texas legislature's 1875 act "to encourage the construction of canals and ditches for navigation and irrigation," Cesario Torres, Bernardo Torres, Juan Torres, and Felis Garza organized the Torres Irrigation and Manufacturing Company by May 20 of that year. For each mile of irrigation canal they completed, the state would grant them four or more sections of adjoining land, assuming the waterway attained at least three miles in length.

CESARIO TORRES, a Pecos County justice of the peace, was born in Mexico in 1834 and immigrated to San Antonio with his family at age three. As an adult, he rose to prominence in San Antonio before venturing west to Fort Stockton. In 1869 and 1870, Torres and his brother Bernardo—later a rival of Judge Roy Bean at Langtry—helped Garza construct a 1.5-mile irrigation ditch from Comanche Springs to their three separate 160-acre farms.

With the 1875 act, the Torres company's plan was to impound water at the Great Rock and channel it along the southwest side of the river more than fourteen miles downstream to Pontoon

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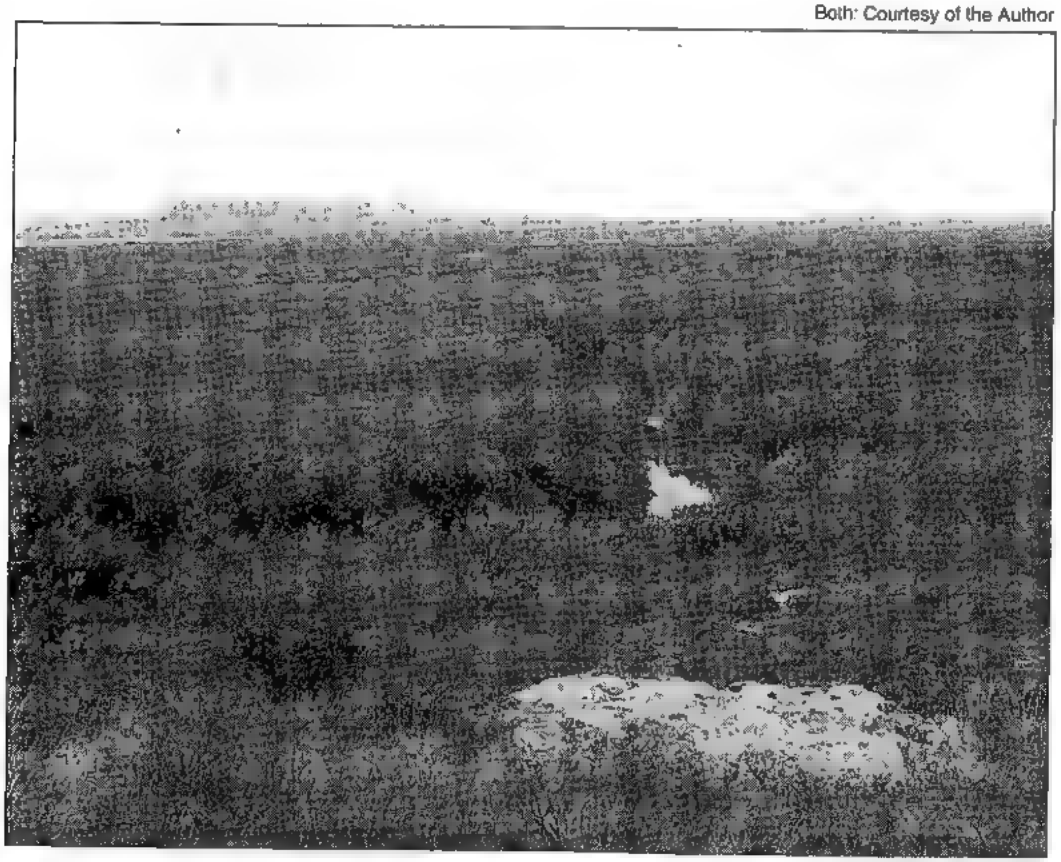
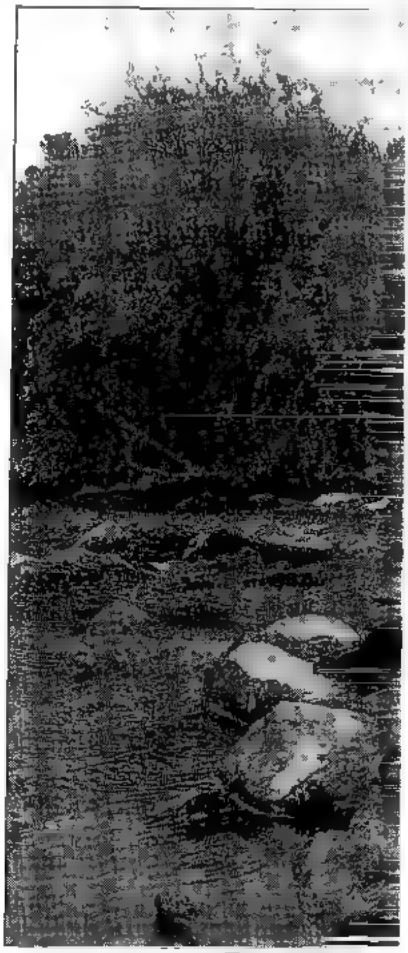
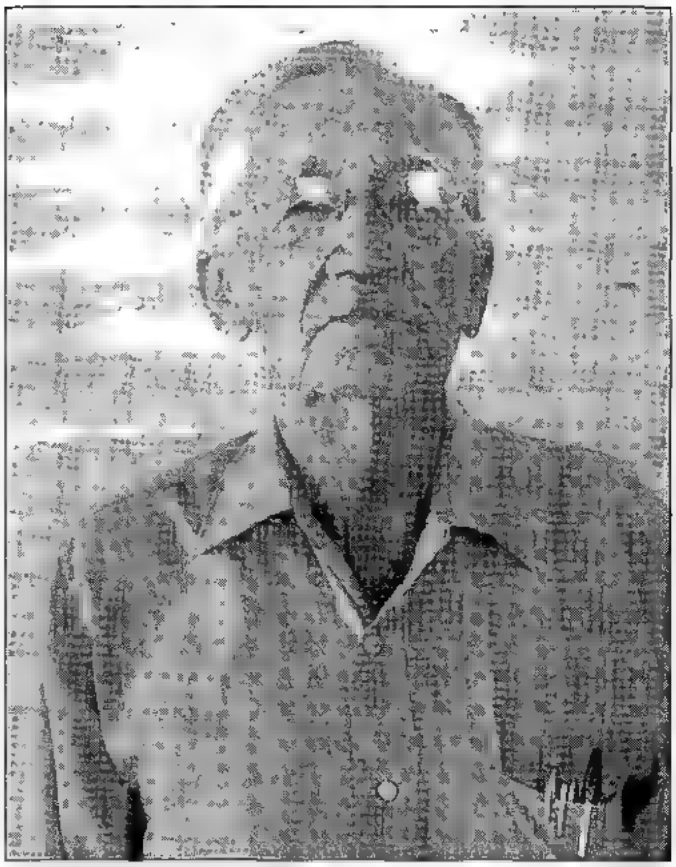
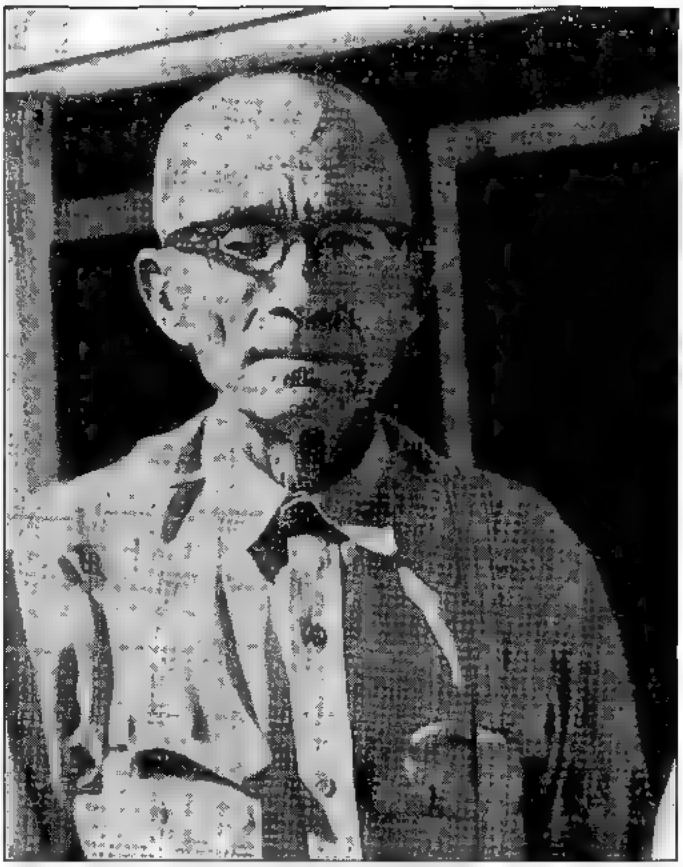




Left: The Pecos River and its lowlands as seen from the summit of the Great Rock. Right: The remnants of Spanish Dam as seen from the northeast bank of the Pecos.





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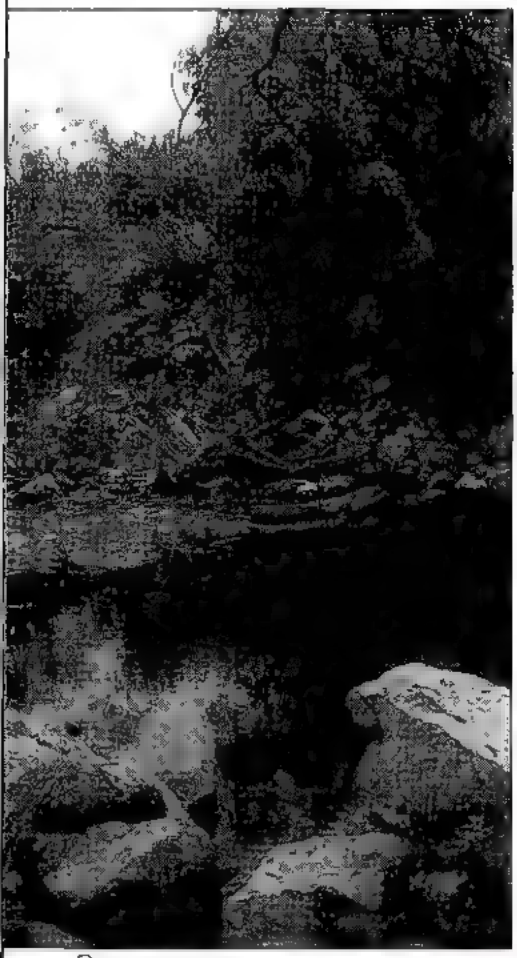
Tyson Midkiff (left) in 1989 and Cliff Newland (right) in the 1960s.



Bridge (Camp Melvin) and Horseshoe Bend beyond. To do so would require the construction of a rock dam—likely the first such edifice ever to challenge the Texas stretch of this flood-prone river that sometimes swelled to a mile wide in places.

With crowbar, sledge hammer, and pioneer determination, the Torres company freed the loose limestone shielding the Great Rock and, at a point in the river opposite the hill's lower end, dumped wagon load after wagon load into a frame of logs (possibly cypress) imported from afar. Then the company set about quarrying and blasting the Great Rock's west face; even today, the bluff carries linear marks where laborers drove spikes into the limestone.

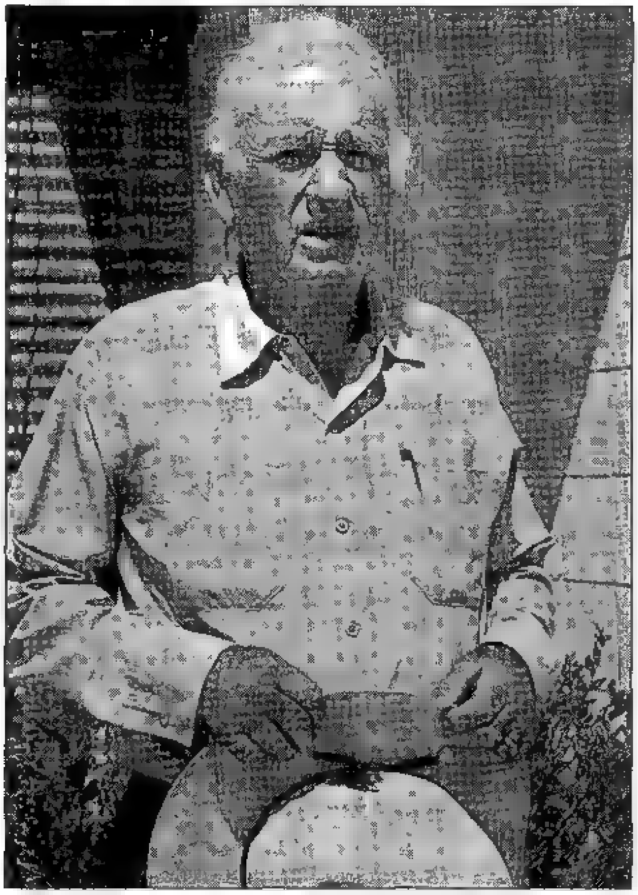
In all, "three or four thousand wagon loads" splashed into the Pecos, according to the June 12, 1877, *San Antonio Express*, which marveled at this feat of "primitive engineering and perseverance." Never a dam in the classic sense, it nevertheless impeded the current sufficiently to raise the water level for two hundred yards upstream, where a canal fifteen feet wide intersected the river.

"It made a waterfall," said Billy Rankin who first visited the site as an eighteen-year-old in 1924. "You'd never think of it being a dam...[They] just slid those rocks down and built it up there."

Cliff Newland recalled, "There's rock there that weighed, I'll bet, four or five tons. How they ever got them out in the Pecos River—quarried them off and got them down there a quarter of a mile—I don't know."

With irrigation water now diverted fifteen miles downstream through the bordering flats, the Torres company and its labor force of fifty Mexican families soon had in cultivation 500 acres of wheat, corn, barley, and other crops, according to the June 12, 1877 *San Antonio Express*. But the Apache threat persisted, just as it had for the Hediondos two centuries before.

ON APRIL 22, 1877, Indians galloped their mounts through the fields of the Torres farm and made off with five horses. Seven days later, a second attack saw the loss of another nine horses and mules, as well as the herd of work animals. In June, a newspaper reporter arrived at Pontoon Bridge, near the south end of the irrigation canal, to learn that Indians had stolen the Torres farm's entire remuda of horses and



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Billy Rankin in 1983.

mules the night before.

Inevitably, the situation spawned bloodshed. In the summer of 1877, five Indians ambushed Pecos County surveyor Thomas C. Nelson twenty-five miles downstream from the Torres operation. One slug exploded into his left breast, while a second sailed through his hat and a third punctured his canteen. Nelson fought back, killing or wounding an Indian before escaping on horseback. He made a desperate, bloody ride for help to the Torres farm, where, even two weeks later, he remained in serious condition.

From its inception, the Torres farm relied heavily on emigrant and United States Army wagon trains as a market for its produce. But with the completion of the Texas and Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads across West Texas in 1881 and 1883, respectively, fewer travelers ventured west along the so-called "Upper Road," and the Torres operation soon closed.

Simultaneously, the Pontoon Bridge fell into disrepair, leaving wagoners and horsemen looking again to the ford guarded by the Great Rock for relatively safe passage across the Pecos. Through the rest of the 1800s and on into the 1920s, the "Old Rock Dam Crossing" remained one of only a few viable fords in the area; the others included Adobe Crossing a few miles upstream, and the notorious Horsehead Crossing along the present-day Crane-Pecos county line.

O.W. Williams, writing in 1902, noted, "[the ford] known as the Torres Dam crossing, at the site of a great rock on the east, was the best and safest. It was the least subject to overflowed banks and its bottom was smooth and hard."

In 1907 ten-year-old Tyson Midkiff and his family, traveling by covered wagon from Midland County southwest to Fort Stockton, halted on the bank of the ford. "Where that dam was falling over, why, we camped there, just about noon and caught some fish, big ol' blue catfish," Midkiff recalled in 1991. "Most of the banks were right straight up and down, but down there where the wagon sort of circled, you could see where the wagon road went across it. It was maybe a hundred yards [downstream] from where that water was falling over. That water was roaring; it made a waterfall."

Upon easing the wagon down into the crossing, Midkiff's grandfather took appropriate measures to guard the safety of the woman and seven children riding with him. Recalled Midkiff, "The horses had their feet on the bottom, [but] the water was up pretty near to the wagon bed. And my granddaddy, he got right out on the double tree there and kept the horses going. Wanted to be sure that they didn't stop the wagon in the water, 'cause it was moving along pretty good, you know."

In 1924 Billy Rankin, a cowboy with the White and Baker Ranch Company, crossed the Pecos at the Great Rock twice in a six-week span.

"We brought a chuckwagon over from the old [ranch] headquarters, and we crossed on the dam," recalled Rankin, who said the rocks had a crest width of from ten to fifteen feet. "The water was about [eighteen inches] high over the top of them; it wasn't up in the wagon bed. And then I came back across it thirty or forty days later, just bringing a pack horse across it. It didn't get my bed wet or nothing like that."

Sometime during the next few years, flood waters breached the dam at the northeast end, spelling its doom. Too, as the level of the Pecos dropped with the construction of modern dams far upstream, boulders lining the exposed banks were hauled away for use elsewhere.

But as the limestone yielded to nature and man, the Great Rock from which it had come continued steadfast, sheltering, perhaps, the secret of a lost treasure. Cliff Newland, who hunted for the treasures of the Pecos country for half a lifetime, believed the hill to be the site of "one of the biggest dat-gum Spanish camps you'll find"—and possibly a Spanish cache as well. O.W. Williams, in his 1902 pamphlet "Mendosa—1684, in Pecos County," reported that the "fancied deposit" was Mexican silver, and that twenty years after the end of Torres' farming operation, American fortune hunters had "pitted and scarred" the dome in search of it.

"The horses had their feet on the bottom, [but] the water was up pretty near to the wagon bed. And my granddaddy, he got right out on the double tree there and kept the horses going. Wanted to be sure that they didn't stop the wagon in the water, 'cause it was moving along pretty good, you know."

The Great Rock remains secretive even to this day, but the remnant boulders of Spanish Dam do not. In the sudden, brief rapids they spawn, they still proclaim loudly the initiative and ingenuity of nineteenth century pioneers.

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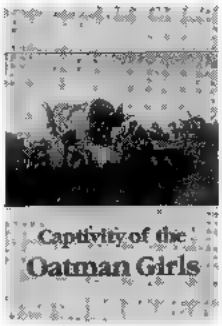

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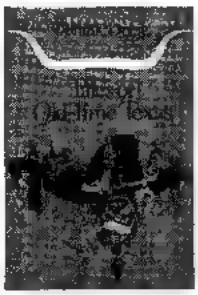

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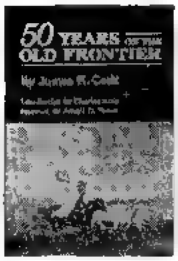

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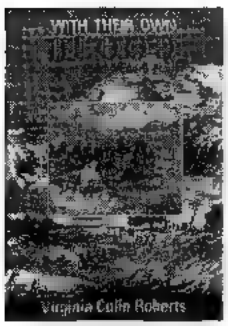

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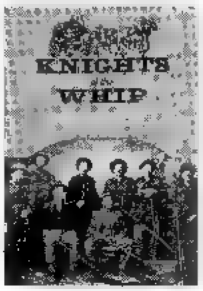

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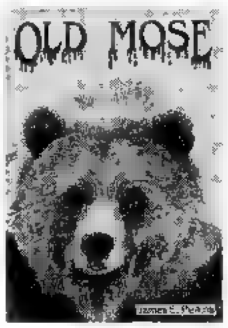

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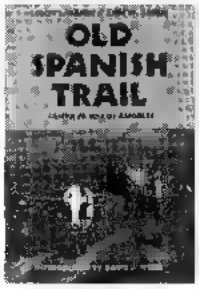

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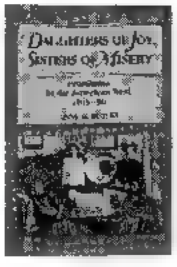

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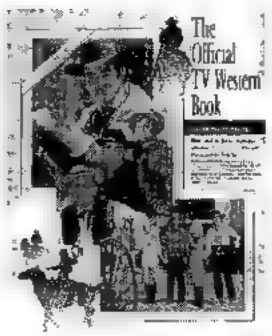

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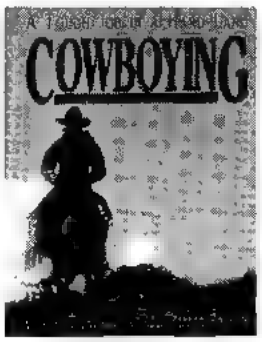

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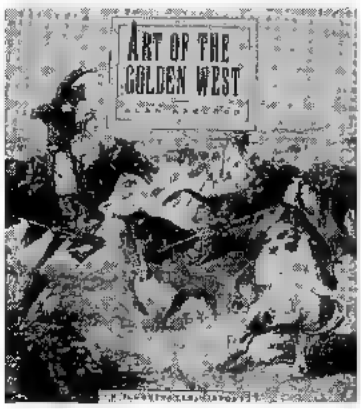

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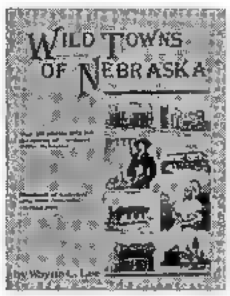

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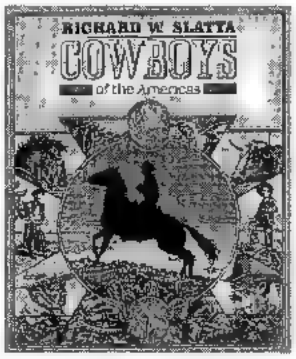

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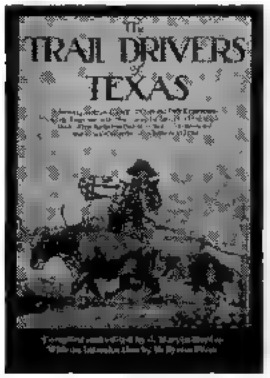

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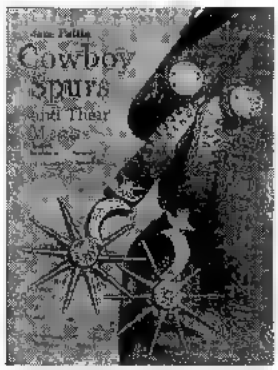

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MIKE RYAN
SELF-MADE BADMAN

Colorado Historical Society

The day after his death, this photo of Mike Ryan appeared in the July 6, 1904, *Denver Post*.

By Robert V. Hunt, Jr.

The legions of badmen in western history came to their notoriety in sundry ways. Some were poor boys forced by circumstances to follow the crooked path. Others were outright sociopaths doomed by fate to prey upon society. Some, however, could have gone either way but consciously decided to lead an outlaw's life. One of the latter was a Denver sporting man named Mike Ryan.

Ryan was born in Clinton County, New York, in 1861, one of five children. He moved to Colorado in 1877, first securing work as a clerk in Bohm and Allen's Commission House. Tiring of that position, he joined the Denver fire department in 1883, where, according to the *Denver Republican*, "while serving in the capacity of fireman he saved several lives by acts of bravery, which for the time made him a popular hero, and in recognition of these acts was given charge of the city fire department."

An upstanding citizen with a bright future, Ryan married Miss Anna Mary Stoops in 1887. Popular and attractive, handsome Mike Ryan stood five feet ten inches tall, with a solid build, and had light hair and blue eyes. Yet at the very height of his good fortune, he embraced the sordid influences that would transform his life and lead to an early grave.

Magnetic Mike, possessed of a "natural Irish wit," began to frequent a small saloon near the fire station at Twentieth and Curtis streets. Soon he became a regular patron and "began to drink beer, then whiskey. Moderately at first, then he became a hard drinker and his criminal career began."

In addition to the lure of demon rum, Ryan also fell prey to the sashaying charms of a Market Street courtesan named Minnie Hall. One of those wild and witty women who made their living in Denver's scandalous red-light district, Hall infatuated Ryan, helping to persuade him to jettison his career, his marriage, and his good name.

Resigning his fire department captaincy in 1888, Ryan rushed to emulate the nether world life of his paramour. He made the transition from protector of society to predator on society with relative ease. The *Republican* said, "In 1888, an attempt was made to hold up a Denver & Rio Grande train. The police suspected Ryan of being implicated, and he was held for several days." Unable, however, to obtain firm evidence against Ryan, the police released him.

After Ryan's twin infatuation with drink and Minnie Hall changed his life, he went into the saloon business. First buying a saloon on Curtis Street, he soon sold it and bought the Ruby Saloon on Market Street. He then opened the notorious Pearl Saloon—a hellhole of a dive—at Sixteenth and Market streets.

In October 1890, one Jacob Zelbach earned the dubious distinction of becoming the first on record to be assaulted and robbed by Mike Ryan at the Pearl Saloon. The next month Ryan made the police blotter by resisting arrest by deputy sheriffs and arming and barricading himself in his saloon.

The next several months saw Ryan perfecting his schemes for bilking and robbing any unsuspecting victim who looked at all prosperous and susceptible. During a hearing in February 1891 to consider the revocation of Ryan's liquor license, a long line of victims testified of the criminal antics that festered in the Pearl's dark recesses.

Because he still had a reservoir of good will and influence from his days as a fire captain, Ryan often got away with many of his penny-ante extortion schemes. But when he tried to "sell" his saloon to a Swedish farmer named Adam (or Allan) Hjorth for $5,000, lawmen had no alternative but to arrest him.

Hjorth, like numerous others, made the mistake of going to the

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Mike Ryan's hotel and saloon in Sheridan Park, from the July 6, 1904, *Denver Post*.

Pearl for a few drinks and a little camaraderie. Both commodities were readily available in Ryan's saloon for a price—often a steep one. That spring evening in 1891 when Hjorth entered the Pearl, he was almost immediately set upon by a group of "sure-thing gamblers and professional thugs," the *Denver Republican* said. To ingratiate himself with the parasites hanging around the bar, Hjorth produced a fifty-dollar check to pay for a round of drinks.

Such largess caught the eagle eye of Mike Ryan, who was tending bar. Ryan quickly horned in and offered to bet Hjorth that his check was not good. More than a little inebriated, the Swede insisted that he had enough money in the bank to write a check for $5,000. Goaded into writing a check for that amount, he had no sooner turned around than he "was slugged with a slungshot. When his body toppled to the floor Ryan and one of the gang with him pounced on him and pounded and kicked him almost to death."

Stripped of the check and all his spare cash, Hjorth was locked in a back room. He remained there until Ryan was able to cash the check the next day. Afterwards, Hjorth "was thrown, drunk, drugged and battered into the adjoining alley, where the police officers found him."

At his trial in November 1891, Ryan's lawyers unsuccessfully argued that Hjorth had attempted to strong-arm Mike Ryan into selling his beloved saloon for $5,000. The jury rejected that preposterous defense, and found Ryan guilty of grand larceny. According to the *Denver Republican*, Ryan "was very suave and self-possessed when he learned the results." Actually, Ryan's serenity masked his real intentions. During a recess before sentencing, Ryan and his guard, who happened to be chums, "walked out of the courtroom to the corner of West 14th and South 11th streets, half a block away, and held an extended, three-sided conversation with Minnie Hall, the courtesan, and reputed mistress of Ryan, who had driven up to that corner in a phaeton."

About the same time Tim O'Connor (Ryan's partner and a notorious character in his own right) arrived in a buggy and tied it directly in front of Ryan and company. O'Connor exited, and as if on cue, Ryan leaped into the buggy and drove off fast. Ryan's freedom, however, lasted but six hours, and several days later the crestfallen escapee heard himself sentenced to nine years in the state penitentiary.

From November 1891 to June 1892 Ryan was in prison at Canon City. But because his case was on appeal before the Colorado Supreme Court, his lawyers managed to secure his release pending the decision.

Early in 1893 Ryan tried to kill policemen M.W. Brown and William Hogan because they had arrested him on Hjorth's complaint. Again, though, Mike Ryan avoided serious repercussions—possibly due to his political connections as an active Populist. Two months later, Ryan reportedly almost killed a former Pueblo, Colorado, police chief named Jack O'Connor by beating him over the head with a revolver. The man survived Ryan's attack but later died after falling into a cellar full of broken glass and severing several arteries in his wrist.

With a lot of Celtic luck in his corner, Ryan somehow avoided paying any penalty for his actions. Emboldened, he was once again arrested in June 1893. This time his vengeance was directed at Amy Bassett of 1950 Market Street. Bassett was a prostitute who had testified against him on several occasions. Ryan retaliated by ripping two $1,000 earrings from her head. An August trial was canceled after the woman decided it would be in her best interest to drop the charges.

Ryan quickly horned in and offered to bet Hjorth that his check was not good. More than a little inebriated, the Swede insisted that he had enough money in the bank to write a check for $5,000. Goaded into writing a check for that amount, he had no sooner turned around than he "was slugged with a slungshot."

In January 1894, an incensed Minnie Hall chased Ryan down the street, firing four shots at him. Hall, who was "entertaining" at Lola Pennington's house, objected to his attempt to interfere with her livelihood.

Within a matter of months the assault charges against Ryan were forgotten. He became a star witness for the state in the April 1895 trial of Richard Demady—the man charged with committing at least one of the three gruesome murders of Market Street prostitutes in the fall of 1894.

Wearing what the *Denver Republican* described as a "faultlessly cut suit of black and gray," Ryan testified that he

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had known Richard Demady for about six months, having met him by appointment at the Casablanca Saloon a week after Lena Tapper was murdered. He said that Demady asked for his help. At a second meeting, Demady asked him to go to Justice James Cater and offer him a $900 bribe to dismiss the murder charge against Demady. Ryan did make a half-hearted attempt to bribe the judge, but double-crossed Demady by pocketing $100 and failing to follow up on the deal.

Demady was acquitted, but Mike Ryan did not fare as well. Because of the trial's outcome, and because Ryan embarrassed the prosecution by admitting he tried to bribe a judge, he was back in Canon City by June 1895.

Paroled again in August 1899, Mike Ryan tried to keep a low profile for several years. But old habits die hard, and in July 1901 Ryan and his bartender were arrested and charged with robbing a customer of $260. The four witnesses against him were deemed too drunk to be credible, however, so Magistrate W. F. Byrnes dismissed the charge. Despite the dismissal, Ryan's saloon at 2662 Market Street was ordered closed by the Fire and Police Board.

Colorado Historical Society

Marshal Hoolahan's photo illustrated the July 7, 1904, *Denver Republican* article on Ryan's slaying.

FEBRUARY 1902 saw Mike Ryan back in the headlines—this time for an errant gunfight with "Deaf George" Vance at Billy Malone's saloon at Sixteenth and Welton streets. According to witnesses, Ryan and Vance met at the saloon and began "talking shop." Vance told Ryan that Ed Chase, an infamous Denver gambler, had a "big pull" and was keeping him out of work, "I've been a friend of Chase, and now he has done me dirt," Vance complained.

Ryan, a friend of the Denver gambling fraternity, took offense and slapped Vance. Vance drew a revolver and fired at Ryan, missing him completely. He then retreated out the front door, with Ryan close on his heels. Reaching the sidewalk, Ryan fired twice at Vance, also missing. Both men were fined for illegally discharging firearms.

Two relatively quiet years passed. Then in February 1904, Denver newspapers flashed headlines of murder at the same saloon that witnessed Ryan's ill-fated gunfight with George Vance. Ironically, the victim was the owner—William "Billy" Malone.

The scenario unfolded when Denver Detective Samuel Emrich, physically exhausted and mentally unhinged after nearly seventy-two straight hours of police work—during which he consumed a large quantity of alcohol—made the mistake of trying to remedy his wretched condition with more liquor. Debilitated and drunk, Emrich walked into Malone's saloon about eleven o'clock. After consuming two or three drinks, Emrich got into an argument with another customer—none other than Mike Ryan.

According to Ryan's version of the events, Emrich deliberately struck his arm and threw Ryan's drink into his face. At the same time he boasted that he was the "best little Jew in town!"

Ryan said he turned his attention elsewhere, trying to ignore the man. But Emrich walked back to him and stomped on his foot, "and with an oath directed at Ryan proclaimed himself once more 'the best little Jew in town.'" This time Ryan grabbed him and threw him to the floor.

William Malone, who had been working behind the bar, ran around and, with the help of the black porter, separated the men. Malone then took Emrich to the washroom to clean the blood from his face. The latter, still drunkenly belligerent, wanted to return to the barroom, but Malone escorted him to the back door. There, Emrich's protests turned violent, and he tried to force his way up the stairs to the rooming house above.

Malone's interference only fired Emrich's sense of humiliation at the hands of Mike Ryan, and he fought back. "He shouted that Malone had no right to put him out; and that he was going to clean out the whole house," the *Denver Post* reported.

"YOU FIRST," he shouted at Malone as he drew his revolver. He fired three quick shots, one of which struck Malone in the chest, penetrating a lung.

Ryan's version was printed in the *Denver Post*, while the *Denver Times* told the story from Emrich's view. In the *Times'* account, Emrich went into the saloon and immediately encountered Mike Ryan, who was leaning against the bar. Malone was behind the bar, wiping glasses. Emrich ordered a drink, but Ryan and Malone suggested "that they shake dice for the crowd," which included several women, one of whom was Olive Hayward, Malone's common-law wife.

Ryan and Malone, both confirmed con-men, delighted in "fleecing all comers." Emrich knew that the dice games in Billy Malone's saloon were usually crooked, but decided to take a chance—telling the men that "if they would throw fair he would join, and the dice were thrown. Emrich was stuck for the drinks and then the men went to throwing dice for 25¢ a corner." Enraged that he continued to lose at every toss, Emrich began to curse. Ryan then allegedly smashed him in the jaw, knocking him against a wall. When Malone rushed from behind the bar to assist Ryan, Emrich drew his .45 caliber revolver and fired—hitting Malone. Emrich reloaded his weapon, went out the back door, and walked to the police headquarters, where he turned himself in.

Malone was shot on Tuesday night and died on Sunday morning, but not before signing a deposition that largely corroborated Ryan's version. The *Post* reported that at Emrich's trial several month's later, his counsel "tried to show that Ryan's constant attendance in the front part of the saloon, was for no other purpose than to

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watch the innocent and unwary customers and slug and rob them the moment they entered the front door." Emrich was convicted of murder and sentenced to fourteen years in Canon City. He was paroled in 1911.

Mike Ryan escaped unscathed again, but his criminal career was rapidly drawing to a close. After causing more than his share of havoc on Market Street and environs, about 1902 he leased the Sheridan Park road house in Sheridan, Colorado, a community of 300 persons nine miles southeast of Denver and adjacent to Fort Logan. The *Littleton Independent* described it as an assignation house, "patronized by lewd woman and bad men." It was also the scene of crooked prize fights.

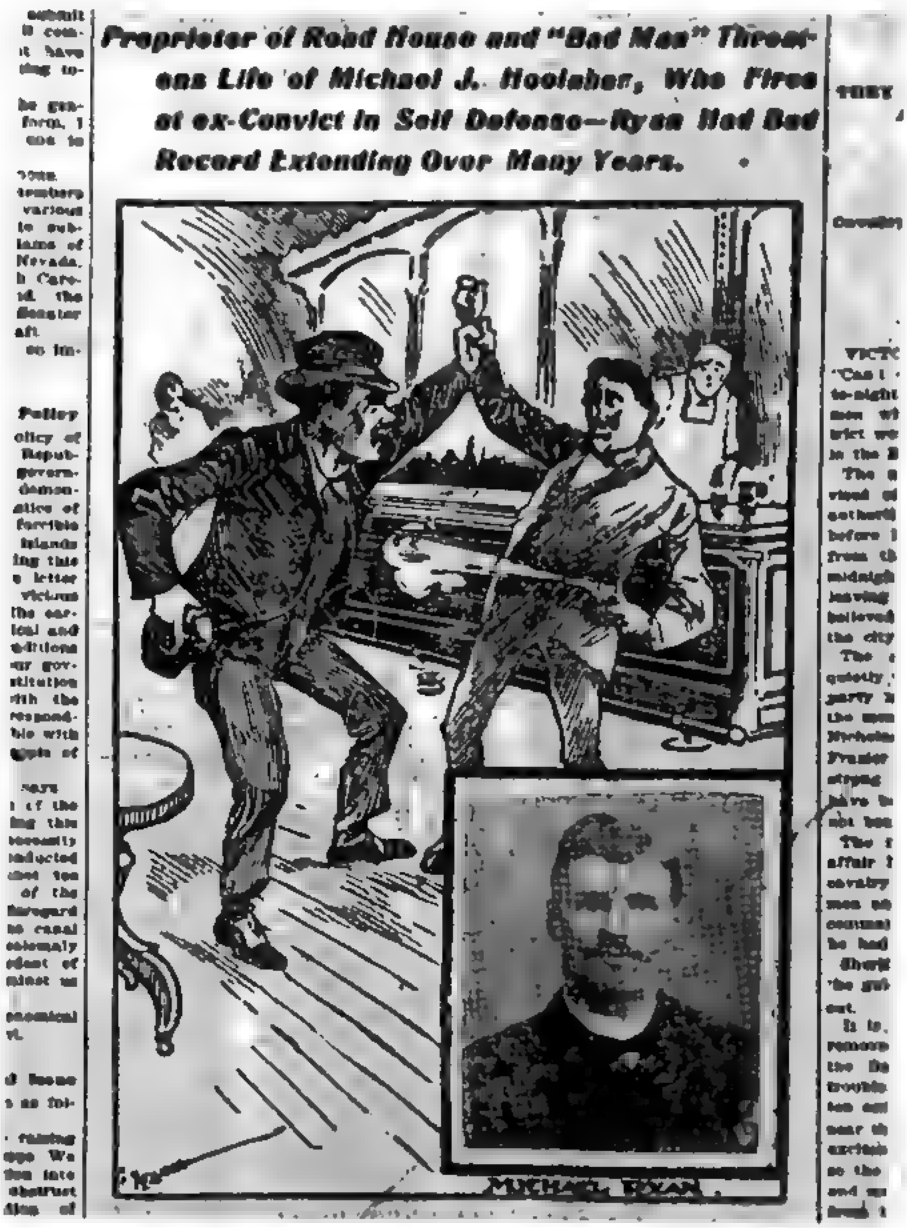
The end came fast for Mike Ryan, and the *Denver Post* covered his demise thoroughly: "His was the fate always predicted for him, and which he himself had often foretold. 'He died with his boots on.'" The trigger-man who propelled Ryan from his earthly abode was a small, mild mannered, twenty-eight-year-old Sheridan city marshal named Michael J. Hoolahan—a one-time friend of Ryan.

Although he had been in Sheridan for only two years, Ryan had already earned the label of "the terror of Sheridan." More impressive was the fact that he earned the appellation while still spending much of his time in Denver at Billy Malone's saloon.

On Tuesday evening July 5, 1904, Ryan was in Sheridan, drunk and looking for trouble. In worse humor than usual, he made "wild threats he would kill five men." First on his list was Marshal Mike Hoolahan.

His memory no doubt clouded by liquor, Ryan probably forgot that a month earlier, Marshal Hoolahan had saved his life. Ryan, like other saloonkeepers in the area, relied heavily upon trade from Fort Logan's soldiers. But soldiers being soldiers, they sometimes failed to pay their bills. Mike Ryan was not one to forget or forgive such transgressions. Indeed, on many occasions he had "beaten them unmercifully at his saloon."

Ryan had gone to the fort to collect bills when Hoolahan learned that a group of soldiers had formed a plot to kill him. The *Post* said, "One of the sergeants, when he found that Ryan was drunk in Fort Logan and the soldiers growing ugly, ran for Hoolahan, and told him to get Ryan out of the place right away or he would not be responsible for what would follow." Hoolahan rushed to the scene and personally escorted Ryan away from danger.


Proprietor of Road House and "Bad Man" Threatens Life of Michael J. Hoolahan, Who Fires at ex-Convict in Self Defense—Ryan Had Bad Record Extending Over Many Years.

MICHAEL RYAN.

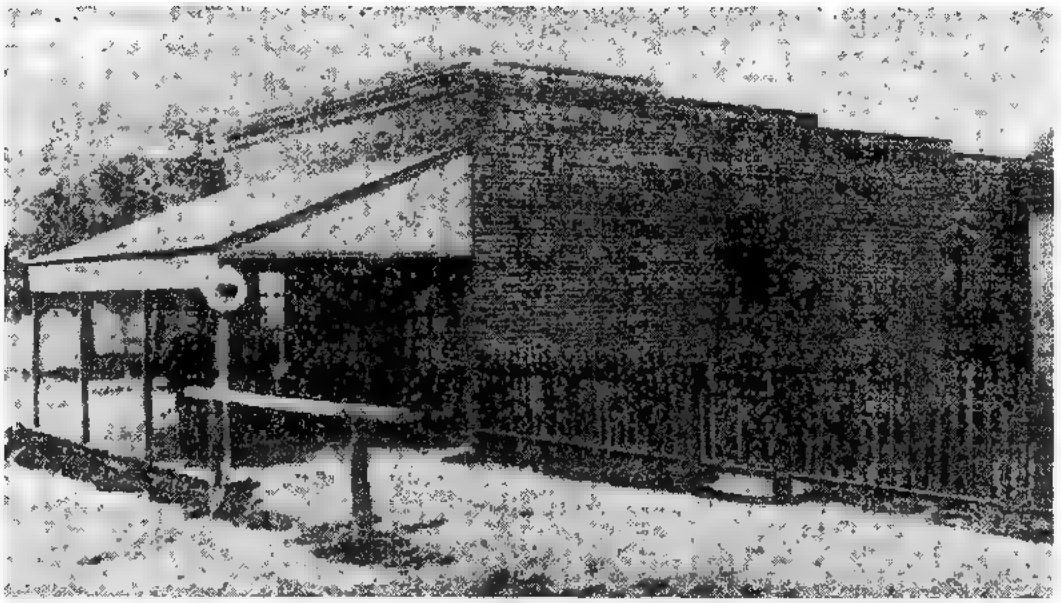
Colorado Historical Society

The July 7, 1904, *Denver Republican* depicted Ryan's death at the hands of Marshal Hoolahan.

ACCORDING TO Ryan's bartender, "Missouri" Jackson, his last evening began about 4:30 P.M., when he left his saloon to collect some debts. He expected to return shortly to relieve Jackson, who planned to go to Denver. For some reason Ryan left his "usual" weapon with Jackson, telling the bartender that he guessed a smaller caliber weapon would be enough.

Arriving at the nearby Star Hotel, a drunk and hostile Ryan "had words with some men in the hotel bar." Periodically, he left and walked over to the neighboring Pattridge and Johnson Saloon. He seemed unusually restless and distracted.

Sometime around 6:00 P.M. Marshal Hoolahan, accompanied by Mrs. Stella Brandt and Mrs. Anna Benham, were enjoying a drink at Fitzgerald's wine room not far from Pattridge and Johnson's. Ryan appeared and joined the group, with Hoolahan going so far as to provide him a seat. For some reason—probably related to the fact that she owned the property at Sheridan Park—Ryan began to insult Mrs. Benham. Hoolahan later recalled that



Colorado Historical Society

The Pattridge and Johnson Saloon, where Mike Ryan died, as it appeared in the *Denver Post*, July 6, 1904.

"he grew more and more bitter and none of us could stop him. Finally I said: 'We came in here to enjoy ourselves and thought you did. You are welcome if you feel as we do." But Ryan was not to be placated. He kept up the insults, and finally Hoolahan and the two women got up and left.

The three walked a short distance to Pattridge and Johnson's Saloon on Sheridan Avenue. Close on their heels was the belligerent Ryan, who continued to rant at Mrs. Benham. Following the three into a rear storeroom, Ryan sat down on a couch near Mrs. Benham. Disgusted, Marshal Hoolahan warned Ryan that "he would have to quit or I would arrest him."

The *Post* reported that Ryan, more incensed than ever, grabbed the marshal's right wrist with his left hand, at the same time reaching for his revolver and shouting, "I'll get you right now, d—n you!" Ryan apparently had never noticed, or else had forgotten, that his former friend was left-handed and carried his revolver on his left hip. "Without trying to disengage his right hand Hoolahan shot back his left hand and drew, firing as he brought the revolver forward."

Hoolahan fired six quick shots. Two struck Ryan in the heart, two entered his head, and the fifth shot struck his right forearm. The sixth shot missed. Hoolahan fired the shots so fast that Ryan was almost literally dead on his feet. For a few seconds before crashing to the floor, however, he struggled to draw his own weapon, which "had caught in his pants."

After the shooting, Thomas Skeen, a bartender from a neighboring saloon, and Frank Barnes, the Pattridge and Johnson bartender, carried Ryan to a poker table. The *Denver Republican* reported that, "Skeen turned and said, 'He's dead.' The crowd in the saloon continued to drink and make merry for an hour after the shooting as if nothing had happened and seemed not at all affected by this tragedy."

For his part, Mike Hoolahan "was as cool as if he had merely locked up a drunk instead of having a close call for his life and killed one of the most notorious men in the state. He is never drunk, and is known as a man of wonderful nerve." The marshal immediately telephoned the coroner at Littleton and offered to turn himself in; instead, he was told to go home and go to bed

News of Mike Ryan's death caused wild rejoicing among both the soldiers at Fort Logan and members of the Denver police department. The soldiers had a "jollification" meeting, drinking and singing songs, among which were "Hoolahan Held the Fuse," and "What Do You Think of That." Similarly relieved, the police noted that "there has scarcely been a month for the past four years that [Ryan] has not turned some kind of questionable trick."

Mrs. Ryan did not learn of Mike's death until the next morning. Between sobs, she struggled to tell a reporter her feelings: "Oh, I expected this would happen, but I did not think it would come so soon. He may have been a bad man...but he had good qualities. Drink was his worst enemy. When he was under the influence of it he was very abusive."

The post-mortem revealed that Mike Ryan was killed by a "very rare" revolver. It was a six-chamber Smith and Wesson .32 caliber. In addition to being an unusually quick firing gun—witnesses estimated that the six bullets were fired in five seconds—it shot a Winchester cartridge rather than the standard Smith and Wesson ball.

Within several days, a coroner's jury was convened at Littleton. The six members unanimously ruled that Marshal Hoolahan killed Mike Ryan in self-defense. While preparations to bury Ryan were underway, his brother, William, and ex-wife tried to stop the inquest; they were now convinced that he had been murdered, shot in the back by a man who pretended to be his friend.

WILLIAM RYAN SPENT two days at Fort Logan investigating the shooting, then rushed to Denver to demand that the undertaker have an autopsy performed on his brother. He arrived at the undertaker's an hour before the scheduled funeral. The undertaker refused but did agree to postpone the funeral for a half hour until Ryan's elderly father in New York could be contacted. No reply came and the burial went on as scheduled.

Mike Ryan was buried at the expense of the Zang Brewing Company—a fitting benefactor. Due to the notoriety of the deceased, the family decided not to hold any formal services. Instead a dozen or so members of the Denver underworld viewed the body, which "despite the gunshot wounds on both sides of the nose and left temple, were lifelike."

For all their concerns about the nature of Mike Ryan's death, his wife and brother never got around to buying a headstone for him. He lies today in an unmarked grave in Riverside Cemetery—the final resting place of a self-made badman.

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Camped in Yosemite

Captain Joseph R. Walker

By BEVERLY LAUDERDALE

Captain Joseph R. Walker was one of America's finest—and least celebrated—western explorers. The epitaph on his gravestone in a pioneer cemetery facing northern California's Carquinez Strait drastically understates his career. It reads simply:

Capt. Joseph Walker
Pioneer
Camped in Yosemite Nov 13 1833
Born Roan Co Tenn Dec 13 1798
Died Oct 27 1876

People primarily remember Walker for his namesake geographical features in the West, such as Walker Lake, Walker River, and Walker Pass. Many of the details of his extensive travels and many of his deeds will never be known, for Walker—not one to keep diaries, write journals, or talk much about his life—refined the art of reticence.

Walker's life emerges as a patchwork of fact, educated guesses and legends, with legend coloring even his origins. An oft-repeated myth maintains that he was part Indian, Shawnees having stolen his father (or perhaps grandfather) as a child; the child eventually grew up and married Chief Tecumseh's sister.

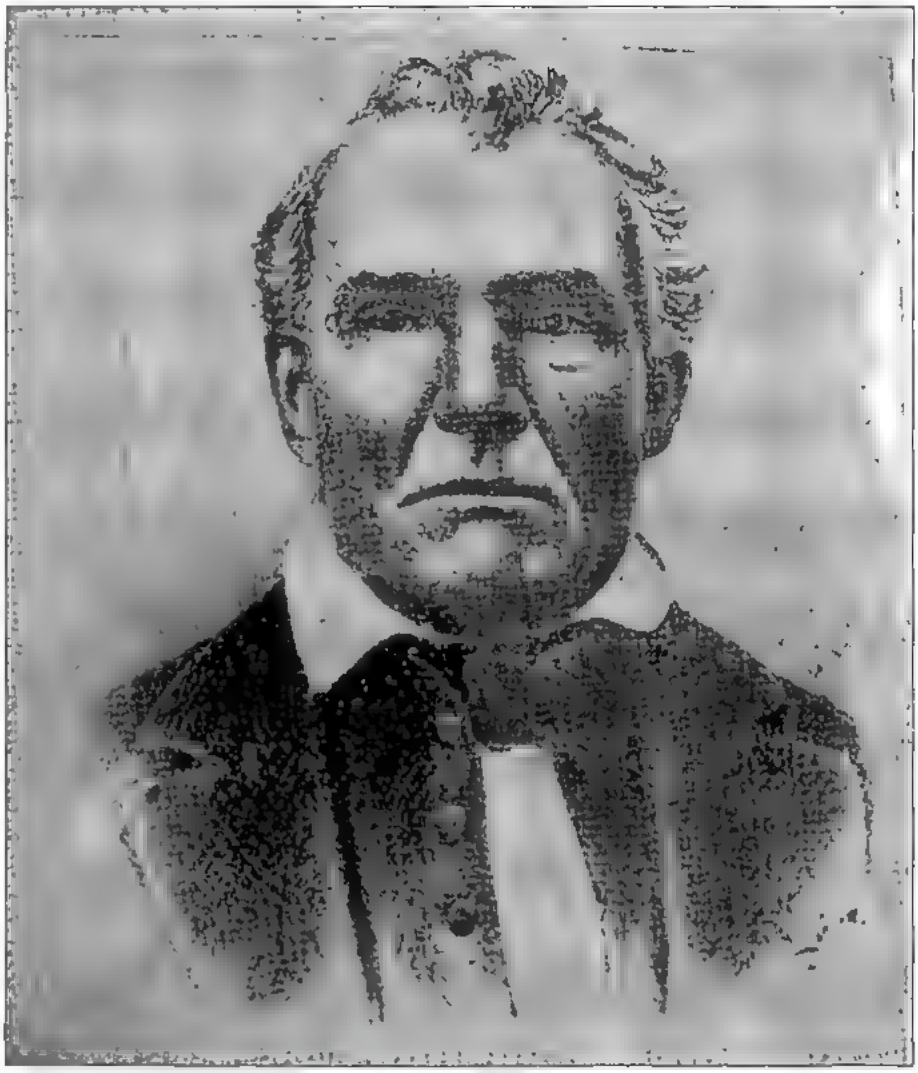
Joseph was actually of Scots-Irish descent. His father, Joseph, married Susan Willis in 1787. They had at least six other children besides Joseph: Lucy, Jane, Joel, John, Samuel, and Susan. Another son may have died in infancy. Young Joseph may have been born in Virginia, rather than Tennessee, and had the middle name of Reddiford, Reddeford, or Rutherford, with the latter most likely.

Joseph was the most famous of the four known Walker brothers, yet each of the siblings lived a unique drama. John, who died young, worked with Joseph on the first Santa Fe Trail survey team. Joel would become an important pathfinder in California. Sam would perish while crossing the Plains in a wagon train.

The Walker brothers, with their sisters and possibly their mother, moved from Tennessee to the western frontier of Missouri in 1819. At twenty-one, Joseph Walker joined some trappers bound for the Rocky Mountains. In 1820, as one of the first United States fur traders to New Mexico, he was also one of the first jailed in Santa Fe for illegally attempting to barter with the Spanish. Walker gained his freedom by promising that he and his companions would leave Spanish territory immediately and return to Missouri.

Throughout his life, Walker maintained his connection with the Southwest. In fact, some five years after his jail release he led a surveying expedition intent on marking a route which would be called the Santa Fe Trail. The venture was less than a complete success, however, for the mounds of earth the men used as markers disappeared in storms.

On the Missouri frontier, Joseph



Author's Collection

Captain Joseph R. Walker, sometime after 1868.

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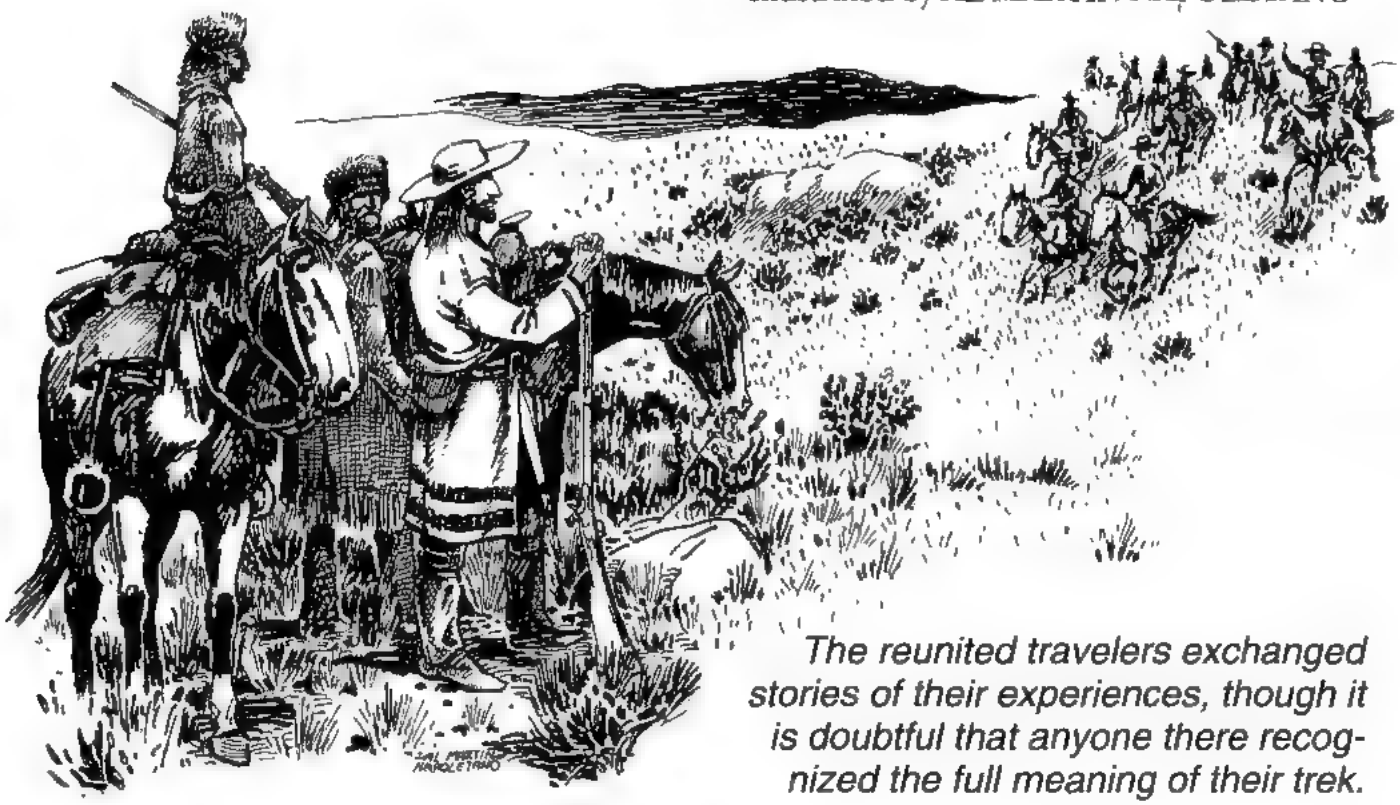
Illustrated by AL MARTIN NAPOLETANO



The reunited travelers exchanged stories of their experiences, though it is doubtful that anyone there recognized the full meaning of their trek.

won election as sheriff of Independence in 1827 and held the position for two terms. His commanding physical presence—he weighed 200 pounds and stood over six feet tall—and his reputation as a crack shot demanded respect, although he maintained a kind, calm, and friendly manner. However, upon discovering a more lucrative career selling horses to trappers setting out from Independence, he refused a third term as sheriff.

At age thirty-three Walker met Captain Benjamin Bonneville, who wanted to map the unfamiliar regions of the Rockies. On a two-year leave from the United States Army, Bonneville publicly insisted he was off to trap furs. However, spying on British and Mexican possessions may have been his primary goal. Bonneville, having received funding for his expedition from business interests in the East, hired Walker as a guide.

On May 1, 1832, twenty freight wagons and 110 men, each with extra horses and mules, pulled out from Fort Osage, Missouri. Historian Bil Gilbert called them the "most lavishly supplied...fur brigade to leave Missouri." In July Walker became the first man to "get a substantial wagon train through South Pass—which in ten years would become the emigrant gateway to the Pacific—and then came down to the Green River, a northern-branch of the Colorado."

Unfortunately, the rich pelts Bonneville sought proved scarce so he divided his company. From the Great Salt Lake Basin, Walker took fifty men of his choosing westward, ostensibly in search of more beaver. Walker included a clerk, Zenas Leonard, who kept a detailed journal. One of Leonard's initial entries states, "Mr. Walker was a man well calculated to undertake a business of this kind. He was well hardened to the hardships of the wilderness—understood the character of the Indians very well—was kind and affable to his men, but at the same ume at liberty to command without giving offense—and to explore unknown regions was his chief delight."

Now using the title "captain," Walker set off with adequate supplies, including four horses for each member of his band. Heading across the desolate plains, the party reached a northern tributary of the Humboldt River (then known as the Ogden or Mary's River) and followed it downstream to just west of the present city of Wells, Nevada. As they bore southwest the water grew brackish and beaver disappeared

On the Missouri frontier, Joseph won election as sheriff in 1827 and held the position for two terms. His commanding physical presence—he weighed 200 pounds and stood over six feet tall—and his reputation as a crack shot demanded respect, although he maintained a kind, calm, and friendly manner.

Naked Paiute Indians dogged them, staying well behind to steal stray or exhausted horses. As the number of Indians swelled to nearly one hundred, so did their evident hostility. The trappers became nervous and Walker thought an attack was inevitable. Accordingly he decided to take the offensive, instructing some of his men to surround the Indians. After killing more than three dozen and routing the rest, Walker's group continued to a point approximately forty

miles east of today's Carson City. Again paralleling a stream, Walker directed his men into the Sierra Nevada, becoming the first white man to conduct others westward over that range.

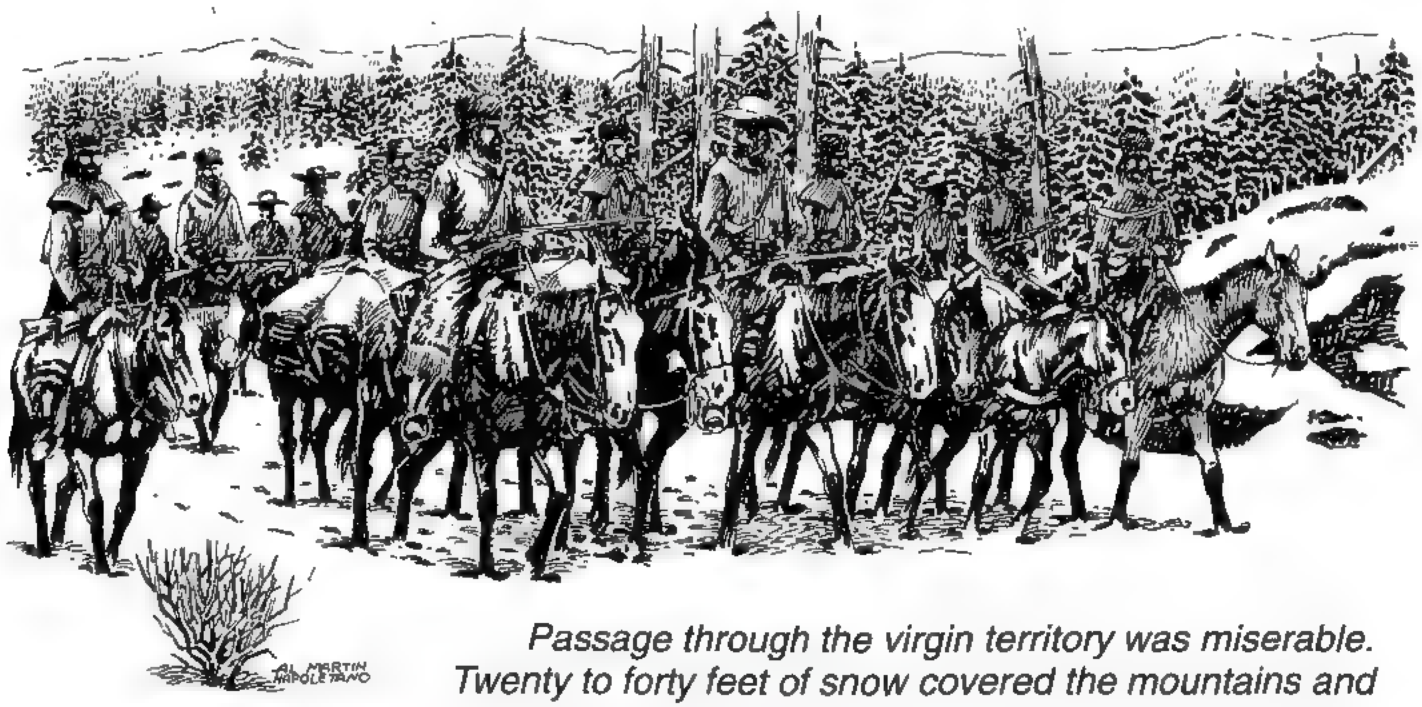
Passage through the virgin territory was miserable. Twenty to forty feet of snow covered the mountains and the wind "shrieked wild and high amid the summit crags," according to Leonard's book, *Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard.* Food supplies gave out, and Leonard recounted that some of the men became "almost unmanageable" and insisted upon turning back. In desperation Walker slaughtered two horses and, although the "black, tough, lean horse flesh" provided scant nourishment, it appeased the most vocal of the party members

Thus the men were weak from hunger and exposure when they first beheld Yosemite Valley, a moment Walker later considered his most significant achievement and one he wanted to be mentioned on his tombstone. Still, the awesome valley presented but another obstacle with even more formidable odds and no visible food sources. Leonard related that while traveling through the area the men encountered many small streams running in deep chasms. He said, "Some of the men thought that if we could succeed in descending one of these precipices to the bottom, we might thus work our way into the valley below—but on making several attempts we found it utterly impossible for a man to descend, to say nothing of our horses."

IN WHAT CAME to be called Tuolumne Grove, the party made another amazing find—trees measuring "from sixteen to eighteen fathoms around the trunk at the height of a man's head from the ground." They did not linger there to marvel, but descended into the San Joaquin Valley. Upon reaching the valley floor, a meteor shower on November 12–13, 1833, heralded their arrival, a stunning greeting that nearly stampeded the horses.

Walker guided his men toward San Francisco Bay. Camping near the present town of Pittsburg, where the Sacramento River joins with the San Joaquin River, he realized he had reached the Pacific Ocean tidelands. Then he advanced southward, reaching San Juan Bautista Mission in late November. For winter quarters he selected Monterey. Apparently his men disregarded Walker's orders prohibiting brawling, trapping on Indian lands, and trading with Indians, and wasted much of Bonneville's money on riotous living while at Monterey. Bonneville later deplored their actions there, along with the Paiute "massacre," and the fact that the expedition garnered few pelts.

About February 1, Walker and almost all of his original crew, plus several additional recruits, 300 horses, 400 cattle, and assorted dogs, began their torturous journey back to Bonneville's camp, a trip which would equal the first in its severity. Initially they trapped along the San Joaquin Valley until they turned up a tributary of the Kern River into the mountains. Emerging at the top, 5,250 feet above sea level at what became Walker Pass, the group rode forward into the Owens Valley, then plunged ahead into the desert. Every day cattle perished from thirst, but their welcome hides served as moccasins, protection against the jagged lava. Leonard wrote, "our thirst far exceeded any description. At last it became so intense that whenever any of our cattle or horses would die the men would immediately catch the blood and gen-



Passage through the virgin territory was miserable. Twenty to forty feet of snow covered the mountains and the wind "shrieked wild and high amid the summit crags."

In 1843 Walker guided the first wagon train to California.

erally drink it down."

After the seventy-fifth animal dropped, Walker led his men back toward the mountains and water. They set out and intersected the trail Walker had blazed from the Humboldt River. Thus, retracing their steps, the men joined Bonneville on schedule.

The reunited travelers exchanged stories of their experiences, though it is doubtful that anyone there recognized the full meaning of that trek. Not only had Walker discovered Yosemite, he had led the first American citizens carving a passageway across Nevada and Utah.

But the adventurers' stories failed to compensate for the scant number of beaver skins they handed Bonneville. Unable to repay the debt he incurred with the trip, the keenly disappointed Bonneville may well have vented his anger upon Walker. Washington Irving in his book, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.*, alleged that Walker squandered funds and hides and failed to complete a comprehensive study of the Great Salt Lake area.

But whatever transpired at the July 1834 meeting, Captain Walker, with slightly over fifty volunteers, soon struck east into the Rockies. The next spring, with no sign of animosity, the two captains met again. After that Bonneville left the fur business to Walker, who alone delivered pelts to St. Louis in early summer, 1836.

For the next four years Walker trapped in the Rockies, where he established a rapport with various Indian tribes. He often gained their admiration and rumors persisted that Indian women found him most attractive with his beard, black eyes, broad shoulders, and a rich, thick growth of hair.

IN 1836 OR 1837 Walker married a Snake Indian. Her name, details of her life, and whether she bore children remain mysteries; only a few anecdotes about her and a portrait of her endure. In 1837 artist Alfred Jacob Miller, at the trappers' yearly rendezvous on the Green River, sketched Walker and his wife. The next year on the Wind River, Walker, with a small band of men, his wife, and a herd of 200–300 horses for trade at fur posts, intercepted three missionary couples en route to Oregon. Historian Gilbert said Myra Eells, a missionary's wife, "was pleased to meet such decent people and invited the Walkers to dinner. She made no mention of how the evening went, but it must have been reasonably successful, for on two afternoons when the men were otherwise occupied she entertained 'Mrs. Walker' and two other Indian wives of fur partisans at parties for ladies only."

Walker took his wife to Missouri to meet family and friends, and records show she also attended Sunday service at the Six Mile Baptist Church in Fort Osage township. Yet after July 1846 no one ever saw her again, and Joseph apparently never spoke of her.

As the fur business declined, Walker increasingly traded in horses and merchandise and ferried them between the Rockies and Taos and between Santa Fe and California.

The captain guided them to Black's Fork of the Green River, where they camped almost a month, recruiting mules and horses and trying to build up their provisions. They headed for Fort Hall but encountered difficulty securing supplies from British factor Richard Grant. Because of the food situation, Chiles took thirteen of the strongest men and rode on horseback to Fort Boise for aid. Walker led the wagons south to the Humboldt Sink to await the relief party.

When help had not arrived by November 1, Walker started off with one other experienced man and twenty-three inexperienced people, ten of whom were either women or children. He cut their rations and pushed them so that people and animals were constantly tired and hungry. At Owens Lake, when weakened draft animals could not pull any farther, Walker

unloaded and abandoned the wagons. Riding and walking, the party reached the summit of Walker Pass on December 3 and crossed through six inches of snow. They had cut it close, as a heavy blizzard closed the route a few days later. By the end of their journey, Walker's group had traversed 500 miles of what would become the California Trail

"During the course of the overland passage he seemed to have developed considerable admiration for the spunk of these greenhorns," Gilbert wrote, "particularly for Mrs. Julius Martin, one of the first white women with whom he had been closely associated as an adult. Years later a member of the Walker family was to pass along a single, suggestive sentence. 'Captain Uncle Jo always told people he thought Mrs. Martin was more than a little bit alright.'"

AFTER GUIDING the Chiles group and after years of mountain experiences, Walker met the Donner Party in 1846 just east of Fort Bridger, Wyoming. He warned them not to take the Hastings Cutoff, a Sierra shortcut. They resented his advice, calling Walker a "Missouri puke," and kept to the Hastings Trail. As a result forty-four people died.

Walker acquired a passport to New Mexico and while en route there, heard that United States Army captain and explorer John C. Frémont's party was ahead. Overtaking them, Walker helped scout Kit Carson move the expedition northward over the Rockies to Bent's Fort in southeast Colorado. He also promised to aid in Frémont's planned exploration of California, leading the procession west from Bent's Fort in 1845.

At the Humboldt River, Frémont divided the group. Walker's section advanced to the Humboldt Sink and Walker Lake; Frémont's band went west toward Sutter's Fort. By way of Walker Pass, Walker crossed the Sierra. The two branches of the Frémont contingent had agreed upon a meeting point but confusion reigned as to its exact location. Walker ended at the Kern River, Frémont about eighty miles away at the Kings River.

The two groups soon reunited, but the discord was an omen of the larger disagreement that followed. Camped near San Juan Bautista, Walker urged Frémont to fight the Mexicans and save California for the United States. Frémont did take sixty men to the top of Hawk's Peak in the Gabilan Mountains, where he unfurled the flag. Three days later, before a shot was fired, Frémont apparently reconsidered the situation and rode off to Oregon.

When Frémont fled, Walker headed south, disgusted to be leaving Mexican forces the Americans could have overcome. Aware that war between the United States and Mexico was near, Walker returned to trading. As the army would need horses, he rounded up almost 500 head in the San Joaquin Valley and sold them.

In 1847 Walker visited his family in Missouri, but the lure of potential riches and lands yet uncharted brought him once more to California and into the Gold Rush. Assisted by his brother Sam's son, James, Joseph sold mutton and beef to hungry prospectors.

Four years later Walker bought a ranch near Gilroy, California, close to property that Mr. and Mrs. Julius Martin owned, but the captain did not embrace farming and again began roaming the western states. He studied the topography near Mono Lake, bought land close to the Mission of Soledad, rode to Colorado to assist an exploring party, and returned to California to head his final expedition.

NOW IN HIS SIXTIES, Walker was alert, active, and unafraid. Leading nineteen men from California, he struck out for an unknown destination in quest of gold. After adding recruits in Colorado the group numbered thirty-three. They angled toward New Mexico and Arizona, traveling in a neat single line. Through the ensuing months as they crossed Arizona, Captain Walker displayed an intimate knowledge of the Apaches and, by playing "cat and mouse" games with the Indians, managed to prevent any expedition deaths.

For three months the captain parried with Mangas Coloradas, the great chief of the Mimbreño Apaches, until, at last, Walker's group captured the chief in January 1863. Immediately United States Army troops removed Mangas from Walker's custody and murdered him, although soldiers claimed the chief was trying to escape. The event must have particularly repulsed Walker, who urged conciliation and patience with Indians, for he never led white men on another expedition.

The spring of 1863 found the Walker party in central Arizona. According to expedition member Daniel Ellis Conner (whose memoirs were published posthumously as *Joseph Reddeford Walker and the Arizona Adventure*), the party enjoyed a "fine woodland" near the head of Hassayampa Creek after traveling miles of barren land. After finding gold in what would become the Prescott goldfield, the miners marked boundaries and proclaimed Walker "Governor of the District." Acutely aware of his age, Walker declined, urging that someone younger assume the position.

The men scouted for food, felled trees to fashion a rocker for washing the gold, built a cabin, and prospected. In time they branched out, searching various tributaries. But as the group diversified and as more immi-

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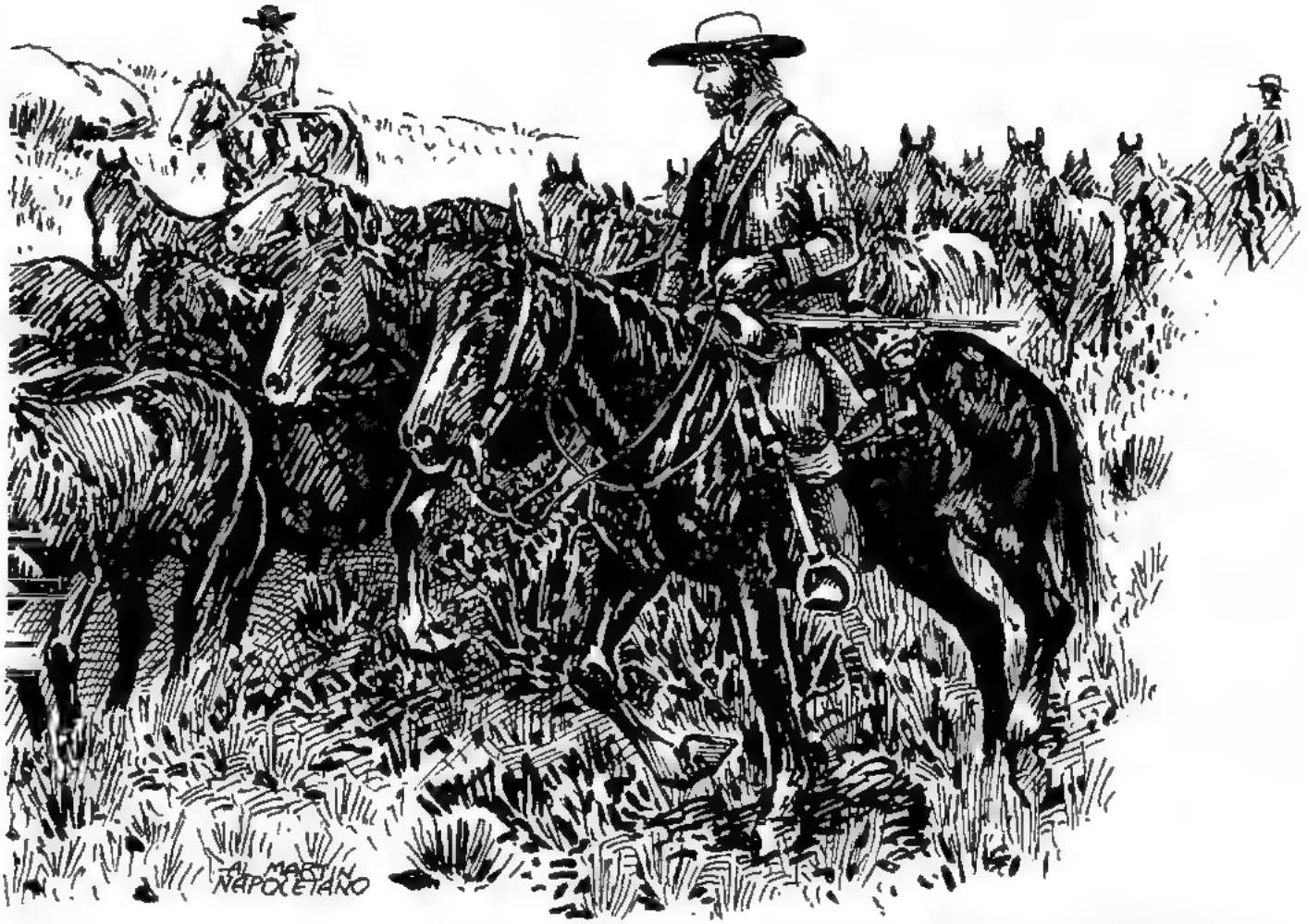

As the fur business declined, Walker increasingly traded in horses and merchandise and ferried them between the Rockies and Taos and between Santa Fe and California.

grants wandered in, the original Walker band lost its identity.

Once in need of provisions for the settlement, Captain Walker and Conner headed toward La Paz, Arizona. The first night out, Conner's mule broke away; the next day Conner injured his foot. "Captain Walker's eyes were failing so fast that he could not see far enough to hunt the mule and I couldn't walk," Conner wrote. Although crippled, Conner managed to locate the mule and said the situation distressed Walker. "To send me upon so uncertain an errand with such an ugly wound to start with and yet unable to go himself, he considered a very unsatisfactory state of affairs," Conner wrote.

To Conner, Walker was "the kindest man I ever knew...Always cool, firm, and dignified...Brave, truthful...kindly as a child.

"His services have been great and unostentatious, unremunerated and but little understood. Modesty was his greatest fault," continued Conner, who expressed concern that Walker's character would never "be known as well as it ought to be." Conner's remarks tally well with other reminiscences which note that Walker spoke softly and never bragged, that he had a keen sense of humor and yet managed to be a firm but fair disciplinarian

By 1868, tired and in poor health, Walker had moved to his nephew James's ranch on the slopes of Mt. Diablo in Walnut Creek, California. James provided a home for "Uncle Jo" until his death in 1876

During his "retirement" years, Walker refused to expound upon his adventures. He made no effort to write down his version of his experiences or to tell it to others. He revealed only limited anecdotes to inquiring reporters and refused to supply missing pieces from his past. Walker perhaps best summarized his influence on the history of the nation when, after leading his men to the Prescott goldfields he said, "We opened the door and held it open to civilization, and now civilization will do the rest."

Buried in Martinez, California, Walker rests near Suisun Bay, not far from the spot where he first observed the Pacific tidal action. Walker's grave is beside those of his sister-in-law, Barbara, and nephew, James, and about five miles from the gravesite of John Muir, who saved the Yosemite Valley which Walker discovered. During most of his seventy-seven years, exploring new frontiers provided him his greatest pleasure, but "camping in Yosemite" was the highlight of his eventful life.

The Giant Wins Out

By Doreen Chaky

Hard-rock miners did not exactly welcome the explosive now known as dynamite—then called by its brand name, Giant Powder—when it was introduced to mining in the late 1860s. As with technological advances throughout history, controversy erupted over its use, and in the California gold-mining town of Grass Valley, miners twice went on strike to ban it. They believed the new explosive caused terrible headaches and other health problems. A successful strike in 1869 banned Giant Powder from the district's mines for three years but ultimately, with lower costs and higher efficiency on its side, the "Giant" won out.

Ascanio Sobero in Italy had discovered the explosive powers of nitroglycerine in 1847, but not until Sweden's Alfred Nobel invented the blasting cap in 1864, and dynamite (which contained nitroglycerine in an absorbent substance) in 1867, did its use in mining become practical and relatively safe. By 1872, dynamite was in general use in the world's mining districts and the increased profits its efficiency brought impressed mine owners.

DESPITE THE 1869 agreement, it became clear in January 1872 that some miners were using Giant Powder in two of the district's mines. Miners who worked with traditional black powder felt threatened. A few were even ready to kill to keep the Giant out of Grass Valley.

At 11:00 P.M. Saturday, February 17, 1872, Frank Steese and C. McClosky finished their work using Giant Powder for blasting in the Eureka Mine. They went to the dry-house to change clothes, left the building, and stopped a moment to chat with the night watchman. The night was pleasant, and the moon was shining low in the western sky.

They walked toward their boarding house, McClosky a little in front of Steese. When they were ten or fifteen paces from the boarding house door, a shot boomed from behind a bush about sixty yards away, striking Steese. A second shot followed, missing its mark, and a blasting cap exploded from behind the same bush. Steese did not know how badly he was hurt, so he ran to the back door of the boarding house, where he was let in. McClosky, unhurt, saw three men run off but could not tell who they were.

The first shotgun blast had hit Steese in the chin, hand, and leg, but his wounds were not serious. Nevertheless, the assassination attempt outraged the town.

Some people concluded that the secretive miners' union was behind the ambush. In Grass Valley, where most of the mines were, the *Grass Valley Daily Union*, the town's leading daily paper, had openly sided with the mine owners who wanted to use Giant Powder. In neighboring Nevada City, the *Nevada Daily Transcript* supported the miners' health claims, but the attack on Steese and McClosky eroded that support and public opinion as well.

Both towns, only five miles apart, had been involved in the 1869 strike which began when a Nevada City mine supervisor tried to introduce Giant Powder. At that time Cornish miners, whose traditions and pride were at stake, found themselves in league with the Irish they normally disdained as inferior miners. Both groups wanted to keep out Chinese laborers, who would work for less than the three dollars per day white miners demanded. The Americans who worked underground wanted no part of Chinese competition either.

Bigotry and racism were certainly factors in the 1869 strike, but the miners prevailed by making health the issue of record. When they returned to

Both: Author's Collection

An ad claiming Giant Powder could save mining companies as much as fifty percent in costs

Frank Steese's newspaper challenge that his Giant Powder crew could blast farther in a month than a black-powder crew

work, they used black powder for blasting, not Giant Powder.

When the *Grass Valley Daily Union* announced in January 1872, however, that "Giant Powder is now being used [in Perrin's mine in Grass Valley] with the most marked success," traditional-minded miners went on alert. They were not only worried about their health. Many of the major mines in Grass Valley were shutting down due to a slow economy and jobs were at stake for that reason alone. Some miners believed the use of Giant Powder would halve the labor force.

Giant Powder required small holes in the rockface—holes that one man could efficiently drill. The method was called "single-jacking." Black-powder blasting needed large holes made by "double-jack drilling," which required one man to hold and turn a sharp steel hand drill, and another to swing a hammer. Cornishmen were experts at double jacking, having had centuries of experience in the copper and tin mines of England's West Country. Irish miners had no such loyalty to tradition, so, for the most part, the Cornishmen stood alone in their fight against the Giant.

Nevada County Historical Society

Eureka Mine superintendent William Watt.

THE POOR ECONOMY also weakened solidarity among miners in 1872. Well before Steese was shot, local newspapers had suggested Giant Powder would increase employment by allowing some closed mines to be worked more profitably.

"We understand that the Giant is to have a rehearing in Grass Valley," said an editorial in the *Grass Valley Daily Union*. "In the Perrin mine it is estimated that fully one third of the expense of working the mine is saved by the use of Giant Powder. Whatever can make our mines cheaper in their being worked is an assistance to the whole country."

But the miners' resolve against the Giant must have grown stronger when they read in the next day's paper about a Giant Powder accident over on the Comstock in Nevada. Miners widely used Giant Powder there, and one John Martin had been trying to thaw some sticks of it at a blacksmith's forge. The resulting explosion was "terrible, blowing the forge entirely away and reducing the house to kindling wood. The unfortunate man was found nearby, with his head badly torn and his body considerably mutilated." No one denied the Giant was dangerous if not handled cautiously.

Miners also continued their complaints that Giant Powder caused severe headaches. Mine owners largely dismissed those complaints as imaginary but Glenn T. Jones, exhibit director of the Nevada County (California) Historical Society's North Star Powerhouse Mining and Pelton Wheel Museum, is all too familiar with the headaches miners blamed on dynamite fumes. Born in 1924, Jones worked in his family's hardware store for years, selling, among other things, dynamite. He remembers going to a powder magazine to take dynamite back to the store. "After World War II, we sold single sticks....I would count out ten sticks, run outside and wash my hands in strong soap and still, fifteen minutes later, my head would explode. I tried wearing leather, plastic, or cotton gloves, and after a few times it would work through the material and I would have another headache." Doctors later diagnosed Jones's pain as a cluster headache. There was no name for such a headache in 1872, but it was probably the same kind of distress the miners experienced.

More than a month before the attack on Steese and McClosky, a West Coast agent for Giant Powder began to advertise daily in local papers, addressing in part the subject of headaches. The ad read, "We beg to advise those who claim that Giant Powder blasts produce a headache, when going right after a blast into the drift, to throw a spray of water through a hose and sprinkler, on the rock when the blast is set off. This precipitates any gases at once, but Miners who are accustomed to the use of Giant Powder abandon even this simple remedy as unnecessary."

As for wetting down rock as the ad recommended, Jones doubts anyone ever did. "Believe me, in those days they had no use for pressure water underground."

PERHAPS THE AD was correct in saying that miners, after using Giant Powder for some time, grew used to it. Glenn Jones's doctor told him that people who work around nitroglycerine often have problems on their days off, when their blood vessels shrink to normal. Away from the nitro, they may even show symptoms of a heart attack.

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Claims in the 1872 Giant Powder ad that "Experience and practical work have proved that...50 per cent in expenses and as much in time are saved," made mine owners and superintendents eager to try Giant Powder for themselves, no matter what the miners thought. At least one superintendent resorted to trickery to get his miners to accept their sworn enemy. The *Nevada* (City) *Daily Transcript* reported early in January that the superintendent of "one of our quartz mines [probably the Perrin]...knowing the prejudice of the men against [G]iant [P]owder...procured several cartridges of it and took them into the

LICENSED [illegible].ZORG
ELECTRONIC [illegible] ON PROHIBITED

mine, being careful to let the miners see them as he went down.

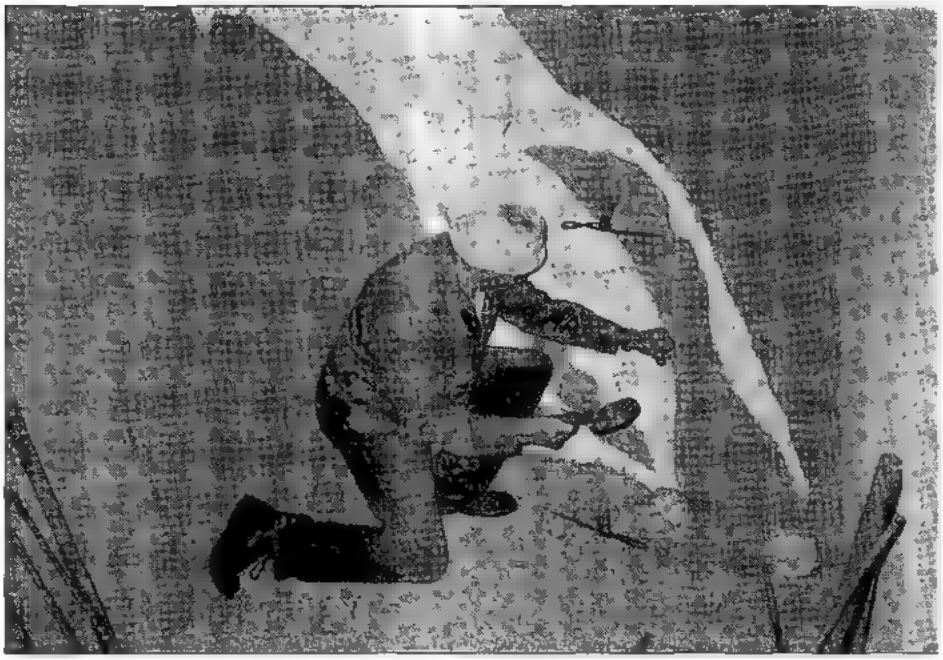
"Shortly after he reached the lowest point in the tunnel blasting commenced.... Soon the men began to feel sick, and some of them came to the surface declaring their inability to work where [G]iant [P]owder was used.

"After sufficient blasting had been done to produce headaches and sickness of stomach in every gang of men, the superintendent came up with all his [G]iant [P]owder cartridges in the same condition as when he went down, nothing having been used in blasting but black powder, and all the sickness produced being the result of imagination.

"The boys that stood the fire had a good joke on those who ran, and gracefully submitted to the use of [G]iant [P]owder."

Other miners did not take the trick so lightly. When Superintendent William Watt decided to try Giant Powder in one part of the Eureka, the result was the midnight attack on Steese and McClosky.

The *Grass Valley Daily Union*'s report of the attempt on Steese's life illustrated the strong feelings that the incident released. Thirty-three-year-old Steese "was born under the flag of the United States, and was raised under the protecting folds of that flag. He has been a miner for four years and has worked nothing but Giant Powder during the time. It may be that black powder is the best blasting agent, so far as he knows, but he is always willing to work the Giant, as he believes it to be his right to do. The right to shoot at him, in the night, and from a bush he does not admit to exist. He was offered work at the Eureka mine and all protection in his rights, but as he was liable to be assassinated at any time by the cowardly skulkers, he will not work here any more. He is confident that he and his crew of men can do good work in the mines, but his personal risk is too great, at present, to justify his continuance at underground mining in Grass Valley."



Nevada County Historical Society

Demonstrating single-jack drilling, Glenn Jones uses a three-pound hammer in one hand while turning a hand drill with the other.

The paper warned that "the public...will demand not only an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but will forcibly take ten eyes for one eye and ten teeth for one tooth," if a similar incident happened again. "We are as much against...assassinating Giant Powder workers as we would be against assassinating those who work black powder. The men who work the Giant, and prefer it, are as much justified in shooting the black powder advocates as are the clan who use black powder in shooting down the Giant Powder men."

"We are as much against...assassinating Giant Powder workers as we would be against assassinating those who work black powder. The men who work the Giant...are as much justified in shooting the black powder advocates as are the clan who use black powder in shooting down the Giant Powder men."

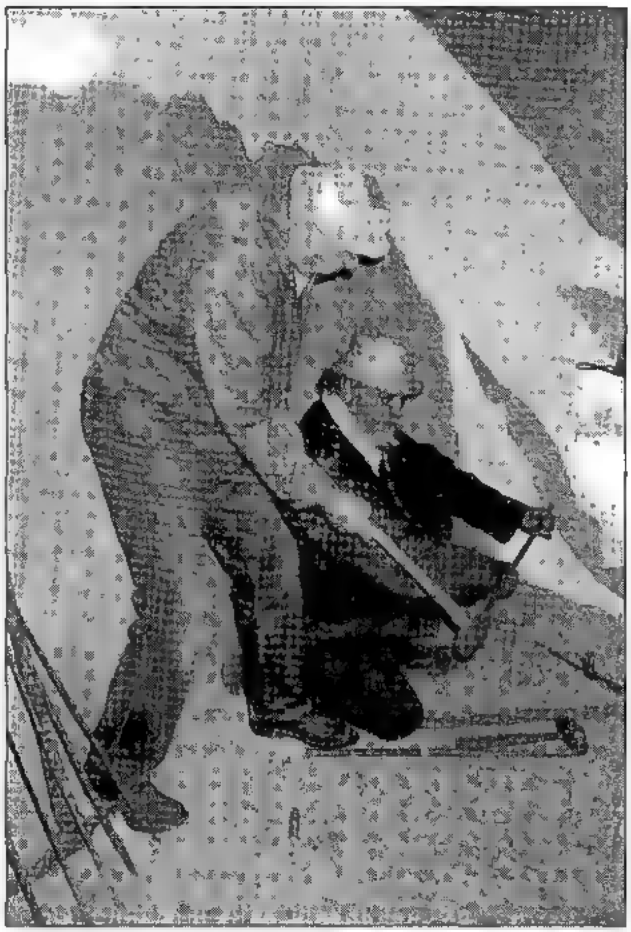
Meanwhile, Steese may have changed his mind about leaving town. His crew placed a challenge in the paper only three days after the shooting. It read, "The Giant Powder Crew who have been working in the Eureka mine will bet $500 that with six men they can run 40 feet of cross cut in a month, in the same drift from which they ceased work Saturday night last.

"The Giant Powder crew offer to put up the same amount, or twice the amount[,] that six men of the Giant Powder crew can run in a month more than twice the distance of any crew of the same number using black powder have run in the same drift in the past two months. The money is at Delano's bank."

The ad ran several times in February. Often it appeared on the same page as the advertisement for Giant Powder

Perhaps Steese and his friends did not realize how much more was at stake than their own prowess as miners and the $500 they wagered. For a while the fight was confined to warring words in the newspapers. On February 24, twenty-eight men were discharged from the Eureka mine, "there being no work in the mine for them to work with profit or with any show of profit to the Company," according to the *Grass Valley Daily Union*. "The Eureka has to lessen its expenses."

Meanwhile, Steese's challenge had been answered and two six-man crews went to work against each other in the John Henry-like contest, one crew using black powder and double-jack drilling, the other single-jacking with Giant Powder. While the two teams worked underground in the Eureka mine, miners struck against the Empire mine. The superintendent had told the men to use Giant Powder



Nevada County Historical Society

Glenn Jones (with hammer) and Manny Corchero demonstrate double-jack drilling. Corchero must turn the drill in rhythm with the blows of the eight-pound hammer.

wherever the ground was wet or wherever good judgment required its use. The day shift refused to comply and quit work.

On March 2 the *Daily Union* reported, in a disgusted tone, that the strike at the Empire was over after only one day. "The underground miners at the Empire mine...do not go back into that mine to work Giant Powder, but will blast away as of old with the black powder. We concede the right of mine owners to take back the men who struck, on the men's own terms....The only thing that surprises us is that so many words were used about a matter which amounted to nothing."

On the same page, in its "local brevities" column, the newspaper twisted the knife. "All is quiet on the Giant Powder question. It is said that the underground men have won the day. Our stock in that fight is to be sold short—very short."

Then on Saturday, March 5, less than a week after the short-lived strike at the Empire, the miners at the Eureka confronted management. During the past two years, miners had used Giant Powder to break up boulders and large masses of rock. Now the miners wanted to stop its use for any reason.

Superintendent Watt tried to reason with the men, and then sent them away to consider the matter until the following Monday. Instead, the men went to the dry-house to talk that same afternoon. The majority voted for a strike and all the men were paid off and left the mine.

Several decided to go back to work the next week as usual "with the full and perfect understanding that the mine must be always worked as the Superintendent directed," as the newspaper said. But those men soon came back out of the mine, saying they did not feel safe from the Miners' Union. At the surface four men, who said they represented the Miners' Union, met them and said they aimed "to have all work stopped in the Eureka mine."

THE CONTRACT MEN sinking the main shaft had not struck, as contract miners chose their own materials and implements with which to work. But now the committee demanded that the contract men also come out of the Eureka.

Reports that the committee went to the North Star and the Defiance mines with the same ultimatum proved false, and the president of the Miners' Union, W.A. Reed, sent a letter to the Grass Valley newspapers denying that the organization had authorized the committee "to use threats and to employ intimidating language to men attempting to work at the Eureka or any other mine where Giant Powder is used."

On March 7, the *Grass Valley Daily Union* reported that "work is going on at the Eureka mine by contract men and by men who work 'tribute rock.' No warning to quit has been served on any that outsiders know of." Tribute miners worked for a share of a mine's profits, and, like contract miners, chose their own methods.

Despite an outbreak of cholera in eastern Nevada, stageloads of miners left to look for work there and hoped they would not have to use Giant Powder. Most of them found the Giant wherever they went.

On March 13, the Empire's morning shift struck in protest, not of Giant Powder, but because the superintendent had fired the ringleaders of the previous week's short-lived strike. A superintendent named White promptly dismissed the day shift before they had a chance to strike. Before the night shift began, though, miners willing to work on White's terms had replaced the strikers and those whom he had let go. In fact, he had to turn several men away.

BY THE END of March, the strikes were over and the men worked with the Giant if their bosses required it. No one had been prosecuted for the attack on Steese and McClosky, and the $500 challenge of the Giant Powder miners to the black powder miners was nearly forgotten.

Then, in mid-April, the *Grass Valley Daily Union* reported that "in regard to the trial between Black Powder and double hand drill, and Giant Powder and single hand drill, in the cross-cut of the Eureka Mine: Six men with double hand drill and black Powder in five months drove 105 feet, or 21 feet per month. Six men with single hand drills and Giant Powder drove 40 feet in one month." The newspaper broke down the cost of each method per month. The cost of labor for the double-jack crew was $468; black powder cost $11.50 and candles cost $11.70 for a total of $491.20. Labor for the Giant Powder crew was also $468 for the month; Giant Powder cost seventy-five dollars; caps, $18.75; and candles, $11.70 for a total cost of $573.45.

Broken down further, Giant Powder blasting had cost $14.33 per foot, while the old black powder method had cost $23.39 per foot. The newspaper noted that was "a saving in favor of single hand drill and Giant Powder of 38 3/4 per cent." It was official, the Giant had won out, but by then it was a moot point.

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Illustrated by BILL MCKIBBEN

In the 1880s, the rules of ladylike demeanor were as straitlaced as a whalebone corset. An unmarried woman did not consort with men; she

Legend of the Lost Cashman Mine

By MARY LEDBETTER

Nellie Cashman was excitedly scrabbling for more of the gleaming gold nuggets when a shadow loomed behind her

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remained contentedly housebound, and shunned most activities that brought a glow of perspiration. But Irish-born Nellie Cashman was unique. She not only ignored a good number of those rules, she remained every inch a lady while doing so. With her dark hair in a soft bun, long-lashed dark eyes, and creamy complexion, Nellie was as pretty as a Victorian cameo; she was also a prospector by trade, and if the situation called for it, she could be tougher than two-penny nails.

Nellie was about twenty years old when she arrived in the Pioche, Nevada, mining district around 1871 to work as a mining camp cook. She soon realized that a miner's profits were as fickle as a doxy's affections. To provide a more stable source of income, wherever the itch for riches took her, she established either a boardinghouse, a restaurant, or both.

WHEN NELLIE HEARD news of Ed Schieffiin's colossal silver strike and the subsequent founding of Tombstone, she hastened to Arizona Territory in 1879. The Nevada Boot & Shoe Store was her first enterprise, followed by The Arcade, which specialized in fork-tender steaks and chops. In partnership with cattleman Joseph Pascholy, she founded and managed the Russ House, a boardinghouse and restaurant featuring a bill of fare that rivaled New York City's finest French cafés.

Nellie was a veritable one-woman chamber of commerce, Salvation Army, and Red Cross combined. Her personality and philanthropy in no time had the boomtown and its citizenry (both the famous and the infamous) wrapped securely around her little finger. Although her whirlwind of activities left little time for prospecting, she grubstaked several expeditions and expected a share of the wealth if they hit pay dirt.

Then one day in the spring of 1883, an elderly Mexican miner pushed some gold nuggets toward her in payment for his Russ House meal. Nellie asked where his treasure had come from, but all she understood of his garbled Spanish and pidgin English was a reference to a dry streambed near Santa Rosalia in Baja California.

Although vague, the clue ignited her adventurous spirit. Within days, Nellie; Milt Joyce, who was the owner of the opulent Oriental Saloon; flamboyant attorney Marcus A. Smith, who later became Arizona's first senator; and other townsmen departed Tombstone on the Modoc stage for Guaymas, Mexico.

From there the party chartered a boat to ferry them across the Gulf of California to Santa Rosalia. After buying burros in the village, the gold seekers set out on foot for one of the most desolate, godforsaken regions in all of North America—the Golo Valley, twenty-seven miles inland from Santa Rosalia.

One day in 1883, an elderly Mexican miner pushed some gold nuggets toward Nellie in payment for his Russ House meal. She asked where his treasure had come from, but all she understood of his garbled Spanish and pidgin English was a reference to a dry streambed near Santa Rosalia in Baja California.

The prospecting party had been advised to hire a guide, but when they were told of a trail leading to the valley, they dismissed the suggestion. To reassure Nellie, the only expedition member with much prospecting experience, the men promised to drop markers along the way.

The track was clear and straight for several miles, then forked sharply. After some debate, they picked a branch and struck off again. They walked many hours beneath the blazing desert sun before their path deadended at an abandoned settlement. Darkness forced them to make camp for the night before they could retrace their steps.

The next morning, again following the original trail, they came to a junction veering off in three directions. The path they picked eventually divided, and in time forked again. It had no landmarks or indications of directions, and nothing to tell party members if they were on the correct path.

On the third day, they began rationing water. On the fourth, the men were showing signs of heat exhaustion and dehydration. Dreams of finding El Dorado quickly changed to nightmares of dying in the desert. They decided to turn back for Santa Rosalia. However, fearing that someone would follow them to the Golo Valley and steal their expected booty, the men had not marked their circuitous route. The group was adrift in a vast, burning sea of sand.

"Don't worry boys," Nellie reportedly assured them. "Right now I'm stronger than any one of you, and I can travel. A good angel will lead me to water."

As legend has it, after a half-day's trek Nellie came upon a trickling

A veritable Chamber of Commerce, Salvation Army, and Red Cross combined, Nellie soon had Tombstone wrapped securely around her little finger.

Nellie Cashman's Colorful Opinions

Throughout her seventy-five years, Nellie Cashman's adventures were newsworthy and her opinions regarding a variety of subjects were eminently quotable. She was a reporter's dream interview.

On men and marriage Nellie said: "I haven't had time for marriage. Men are a nuisance anyhow, now aren't they? They're just boys grown up. I've nursed them, embalmed them, fed and scolded them, acted as mother confessor and fought my own with them and you have to treat them just like boys."

Nellie was known for extending a helping hand and commented: "Any man I ever met, if he needed my help, got it, whether it was a hot meal, nursing, mothering, or whatever else was needed. After all, we pass this way only once, and it's up to us to help our fellows when they need our help."

On mining, the female prospector said: "Just when you don't expect it, you strike it rich and then when you think you are about to become a silver queen or a copper queen, the vein peters out and you hear there's a big new strike in Alaska or some other godforsaken place."

On women owning businesses: "Some women in business think they should be given special favors because of their sex. Well, all I can say after years of experience is that those special favors spell doom to any woman and her business. It gives me a feeling of pride to be able to go back to every place I've ever been and look folks square in the eye and know that I've paid my bills and played the game like a man."

Of taking risks, Nellie said: "You never know when your time will come to cash in your checks. It all adds interest and variety to life." Nellie said of her lifestyle: "I've suffered trials and hardships in the frozen plains of Alaska and on the deserts of Arizona. I've been alone all my life but I have been happy and healthy. That's why all are fooled by my age. And that is why I'm not afraid like most women to tell you that I'm sixty-seven and that I'm mighty apt to make a million or two before I leave this romantic business of mining."

Nellie Cashman realized untold thousands of dollars from her profitable business and mining enterprises but she gave her money away, sometimes faster than she earned it. Whether it was providing free meals and beds to down-on-their-luck miners or making sizable donations to various charities, as Nellie told *Arizona Star* reporter Bernice Cosulich, "Whenever I saw something that needed doing, I did it."

streambed. While scooping a trench to fill her canteen, she saw a smattering of gold nuggets gleaming among the pebbles. She was excitedly scrabbling for more when a shadow loomed from behind her.

Dressed in a hooded robe, his feet shod in sandals and his waist cinched by a cord from which dangled a roughly hammered gold cross, the man introduced himself as Father Pedro and invited Nellie to accompany him to his mission. After a simple but sumptuous meal, the father told Nellie that the gold she had found was the sole means of support for his parish. Although he could do nothing to stop her, if she revealed the ore's location the resulting stampede of prospectors would strip his people of their livelihood.

The group's trouble was not over. Before they had time to gather their belongings, the Arizonans were arrested and imprisoned for mutiny. Nellie and her companions spent several days in foul-smelling, filthy Mexican jail cells before their release.

At sunrise, Father Pedro presented Nellie with supplies, mules, and a guide to lead her back to her friends and on to Santa Rosalia. Before she left the mission, Nellie promised the priest that his secret was safe with her.

THE FORTUNE SEEKERS had barely recovered from their Golo Valley misadventure when their lives were jeopardized again while recrossing the Bay of California. Judging by the boat's lurching over the waves, the craft's captain had been the cantina's best customer the night before. Before he swamped the craft, the prospectors hog-tied the inebriated man and stowed him securely below decks. With the help of two more seaworthy sailors, they proceeded safely on to Guaymas.

The group's trouble was not over. Before they had time to gather their belongings, the Arizonans were arrested and imprisoned for mutiny. Nellie and her companions spent several days in filthy foul-smelling, Mexican jail cells before the American consul finally negotiated their release.

Since a few of the prospectors had puffed out their chests and bragged about the fortune they planned to bring back from Baja California going home with nothing but sand in their pockets left them open to ridicule. Those jeers must have been particularly rankling to Nellie, reputed to be the country's only female mining expert. After all, hadn't she stumbled on a stream laden with nuggets, probably carried by the water from a richer field just waiting to be discovered in the craggy peaks near Father Pedro's mission?

STILL, FOR ALL the adventures Nellie Cashman told and retold during newspaper interviews over the next sixty years, rarely did she so much as mention the Guaymas expedition. Nevertheless, accounts (or the absence thereof) of that ill-fated foray gave rise to speculations, contradictions, and campfire stories of "The Lost Cashman Mine."

Did that feisty, Irish immigrant with a heart as golden as the ore she sought really find a potential Mother Lode in the Golo Valley? The answer is left for time to tell, because just as she promised, Nellie Cashman never did.

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David Jackson Mysterious Mountain Man

By James A. Crutchfield

David E. Jackson was one of the most brilliant, yet elusive, players in the vast drama of the Rocky Mountain fur trade. Although Jackson is little-known today, he was a well-respected member of the mountain-man brotherhood in the 1820s when the western beaver trade was at its peak.

Jackson became a mountain man when he responded to the now-famous advertisement General William Ashley placed in the February 13, 1822, *Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser*, calling for one hundred "enterprising young men" to join his Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Ashley, a War of 1812 veteran and the man who would initiate the rendezvous system of resupplying fur trappers, advised in the ad that volunteers would be traveling to the source of the Missouri River and would be away from home from one to three years. Ashley's associate, Major Andrew Henry, would command the expedition.

JACKSON'S RESPONSE placed him among a distinguished group of men who, at one time or another, worked with Ashley's and Henry's Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Several of those adventurers became legends, such as Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger, Tom Fitzpatrick, Hugh Glass, Jim Beckwourth, and the Sublette brothers, William and Milton.

Most of the men who responded to Ashley's advertisement were in their late teens or early twenties—wild, single, and looking for adventure. Jackson, however, was about thirty-two years old, married, and the father of four children. Why would a settled man with a sizable family volunteer his services for what he must have understood to be a dangerous mission that would keep him away from the comforts of his home for two or three years?

One answer might be that David's brother, George, was a Missouri mill owner and had known Ashley since 1810. Also, both Jackson brothers farmed land near lead mines that Andrew Henry operated. Thus, it is possible that David was well acquaint-

ed with both Ashley and Henry, and that Ashley persuaded him to join the company to provide a measure of maturity to the otherwise youthful group. Judging from Jackson's value to Ashley in later years as an administrative and clerical employee, he apparently also contributed hard-to-find managerial skills to the business.

In any event, the spring of 1822 found David Jackson accompanying Henry up the Missouri River to its confluence with the Yellowstone River. There Henry's group built a fort, naming it, appropriately enough, Fort Henry. As fall approached, Henry's expedition split into two parties, one moving farther up the Missouri to the mouth of the Musselshell River, the other staying behind at Fort Henry.

After losing one boat to the treacherous waters of the Missouri, Ashley arrived at Fort Henry by mid-October with a second vessel, more men, and supplies. Leaving his valuable cargo, Ashley quickly returned to St. Louis to make preparations for the next year's hunt. Jackson presumably accompanied Ashley back down the river, for he was present with Ashley the following spring in a battle with Arikara Indians.

Trouble with the Arikaras began when Ashley again journeyed up the Missouri in the spring of 1823. The Arikaras were erratic in their hostility toward whites. Although seemingly friendly to Ashley's party when it reached their villages along the Missouri, the fickle Arikaras attacked the fur trappers and sent them packing downriver with a casualty count of thirteen men killed and eleven wounded.

The battle provides some hard facts about David Jackson. Years after the conflict, William Waldo, a veteran of the Arikara fight and later one of Jackson's employees, wrote, "Sublette and Jackson after fighting bravely around the animals, until all were either killed or dispersed, fought their way through the crowded ranks of Indians, leaped into the river, and under a hail storm of arrows and balls, swam to the boats."

ASHLEY CALLED for help from both Henry, who still occupied Fort Henry, and a contingent of United States Army troops at Fort Atkinson, miles downstream. In response to Ashley's plea, Colonel Henry Leavenworth, along with a mixed group of fur trappers employed by the rival Missouri Fur Company, maneuvered upriver to Ashley's rescue. Henry brought as many men as he could downstream from Fort Henry.

Jackson may also have been present for a second skirmish with Arikaras, that one in August 1823, after Ashley's remnants regrouped with Leavenworth's and Henry's reinforcements. A man named George Jackson was listed as a lieutenant with Ashley's group during that engagement (which marked the first time United States troops fought Indians west of the Mississippi River). As David Jackson was present during the first battle and his brother, George, was at home on his farm during the same period, Ashley, a friend of both brothers, apparently confused the two when he documented the battle.

David Jackson apparently attended the first fur trade rendezvous, held on Henry's Fork of the Green River in July 1825. Proof of his presence there comes from Ashley, who commented later in the year that, "On the 1st day of July, all the men in my employ or with whom I had any concern in the country...were assembled in two camps...about 20 miles distant from the place appointed by me as a general rendezvous."

Jackson also appeared at the 1826 rendezvous near the Bear River in present-day Utah. There, in July, Ashley sold his Rocky Mountain Fur Company to a partnership that Jackson, Jedediah Smith, and William Sublette formed. Known as Smith, Jackson, & Sublette, the company,

Jackson also appeared at the 1826 rendezvous near the Bear River in present-day Utah. There, in July, Ashley sold his Rocky Mountain Fur Company to a partnership that Jackson, Jedediah Smith, and William Sublette formed.

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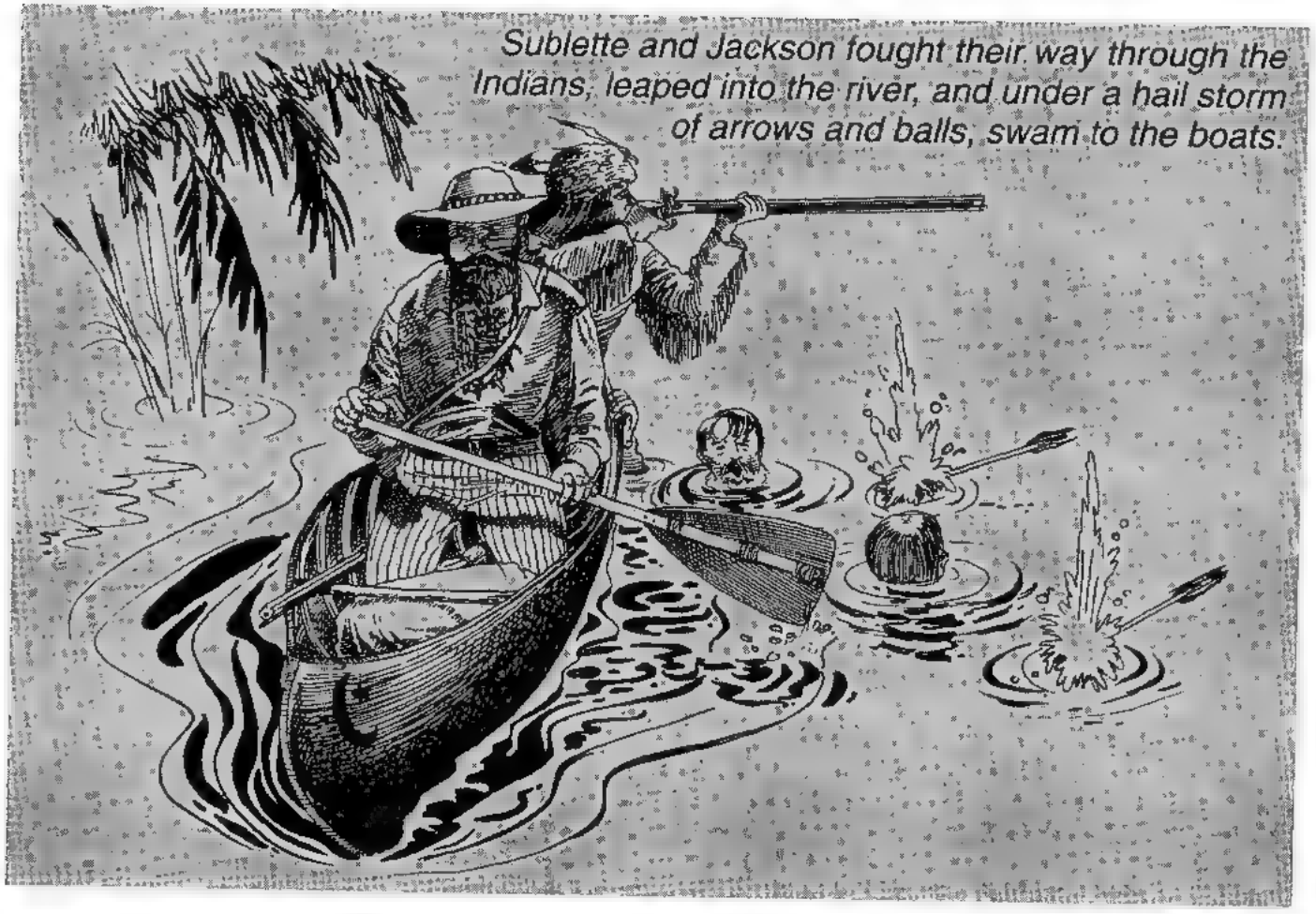
Sublette and Jackson fought their way through the Indians, leaped into the river, and under a hail storm of arrows and balls, swam to the boats.

according to Ashley, was to be paid "in Beaver fur delivered in that country at three dollars pr. pound or I am to receive the fur, transport the same to St. Louis and have it disposed of on their account."

For several years Smith, Jackson, & Sublette prospered. According to Carl D.W. Hays, a Jackson descendant and the author of a brief biography of his ancestor, the three men divided duties to allow Smith to explore, Jackson to administer day-to-day business affairs, and Sublette to travel to and from St. Louis with furs and supplies. Such an arrangement for Jackson would have corresponded with his earlier duties with Ashley.

Jackson, while primarily fulfilling a clerical responsibility to his company, still traveled throughout the Rocky Mountains a great deal. Early in his travels Jackson visited a lush valley nestled at the eastern base of the Grand Teton Mountains. Eventually, probably around 1829, the place became known as Jackson Hole because of Jackson's affection for and frequent visits to the spot. The place was definitely called Jackson Hole by 1832 because another mountain man, Warren Angus Ferris, wrote that on July 4, 1832, he "descended into a large prairie valley, called Jackson's Big Hole." Ferris said the valley "receives its name from one of the firm of Smith, Sublett[e] and Jackson."

In 1830, Smith, Jackson & Sublette sold out to another partnership, which revived the name Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Smith, Jackson, and Sublette all returned to St. Louis, where they sold their furs for nearly $85,000, thus realizing their most profitable year in the mountains.

AFTER RETURNING to St. Louis, Smith, with Jackson's help, worked on a new, comprehensive map of the West. A notation on the map along the middle segment of the Snake River indicated that "Most of what is known of this section of the country has been derived from Mr. Jackson." Smith also designated Jackson Lake (at Jackson Hole) on his map, making the occurrence the first time that Jackson's name appeared on a map in association with any natural feature.

In the spring of 1831 the old partners—Jackson, Smith, and Sublette—left Missouri on a trading expedition to New Mexico. The expedition of eighty-five men and twenty-three mule-drawn wagons followed the Santa Fe Trail until it divided into the mountain route and Cimarron Cutoff; the wagon master opted for the shorter Cimarron Cutoff. Water was scarce along the route and the suffering of men and animals who usually thirsted for two days until they reached the other side of the desert often negated the time saved in travel.

The expedition experienced its own tragedy when Comanches killed Jedediah Smith while he was attempting to locate a waterhole for the caravan. When the wagon train finally arrived in Santa Fe, Jackson had had his fill of the Santa Fe trade. When he heard of the profits that could be made in the California mule trade, he was off to the Pacific. He reached the village of Los Angeles December 5, 1831.

Returning to New Mexico with his mules, Jackson reached Santa Fe in July 1832. The journey across the

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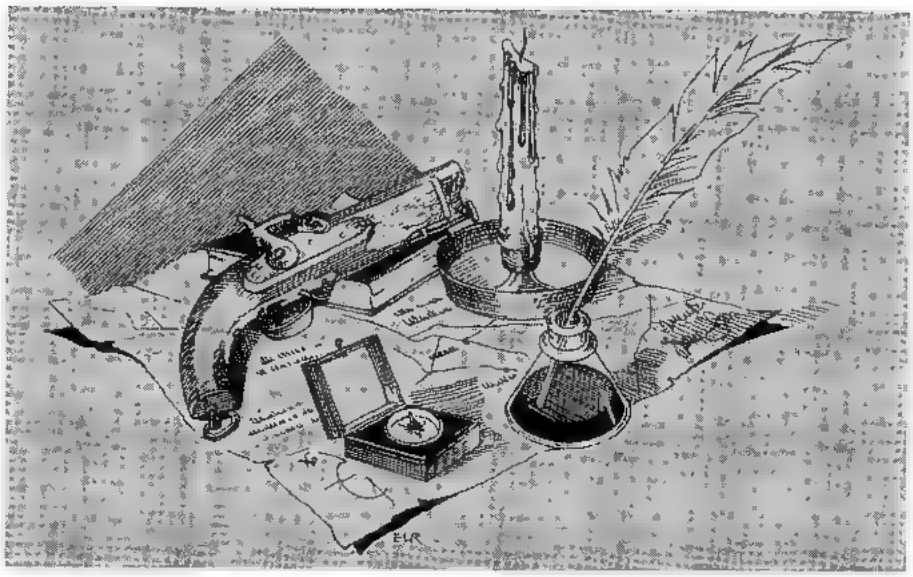
deserts of Southern California and Arizona had taken its toll on the mules, but the few that survived were soon headed for Missouri over the Santa Fe Trail. Although records do not show that Jackson ever returned to California, he did apparently stay in the mule business for some time after returning to Missouri.

Jackson wanted to get back in the Santa Fe trade and perhaps even return to California, but his health became poor and his weakening body would not allow it. Jackson had financial stability and he had invested sizable amounts of money in Tennessee and other places in the South. His strong fiscal position did not last, however. By 1837 a financial crisis gripped the country, and inflation and bad debts began to take their toll.

That year Jackson went to Paris, Tennessee, to collect on some of his investments in that region. He contracted typhoid fever and never recovered, dying in Paris on December 24, 1837. The location of Jackson's grave is unknown; he may have been buried in Paris, or he may have been returned to Missouri.



David Jackson remains an enigma; even today little is known about him or his family. Although the achievement of many of his companions in the fur trade now overshadow his own, Jackson contributed much to the fur trade industry and to an understanding of the geography of the American West. Today people remember him primarily by his namesakes—Jackson Lake, Jackson Hole, and the town of Jackson, Wyoming.

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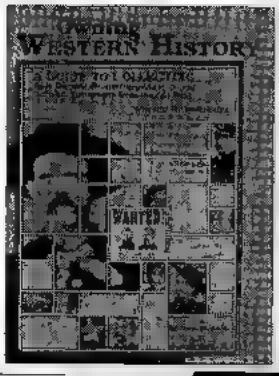

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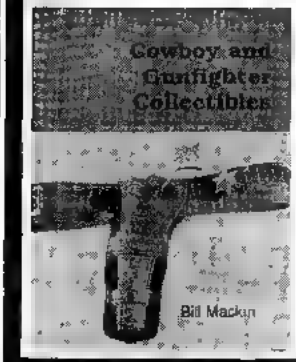

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Reviews

A Character's Life

Whiskey Peddler: Johnny Healy, North Frontier Trader, by William R. Hunt. (Mountain Press, P.O. Box 2399, Missoula, Montana 59806. $12.00 paper bound.)

John Jerome Healy, born in Cork, Ireland, in 1840 in the midst of the worst famine in the country's history, had, for most of his extraordinary life, the fabled luck of the Irish. The Healy luck has lasted eighty-five years after his death in that he now has a diligent, thorough, and fair biographer in William R. Hunt.

Healy's parents took him to Ellis Island, then to Brooklyn, probably in 1853. Young Johnny, with a patched-together street education, a canny mind, and considerable ambition, found something for himself out west and up north, not all of it legal, some of it scandalous, and all of it fascinating. He rose from soldier, argonaut, and whiskey peddler to a sort of merchant prince of the Yukon before he died in San Francisco in 1908.

Healy, who went to Utah Territory with the cavalry in 1858, began his western career as a gold-hunter along the Columbia River. A prospecting trip to Edmonton in 1864, where he observed the activities in the Hudson Bay posts, inspired him to the trader's life, and by 1869 he had a job as trader on the Sun River Blackfeet reservation.

Soon, with United States marshals in Montana harassing him, Healy sought freer trading opportunities and moved to Alberta in western Canada. There, with a partner, he built a log post he called Fort Hamilton, but which became celebrated as "Fort Whoop-Up." The trail from Fort Benton in the Montana goldfields to Healy's post was the "Whoop-Up Trail."

Healy, in his own newspaper memoirs, stressed trade with Indians in guns, cloth, tobacco, utensils, sugar, flour, tea, salt, and knives for buffalo robes, but the whiskey business (which he never mentioned) was Whoop-Up's mainstay. The rotgut was diluted with red peppers, burnt sugar, tobacco, ginger, and water and dispensed from a tub with a tin cup.

Eventually, with the newly organized Northwest Mounted Police on his tail, Healy moved on. He served as sheriff of Chouteau County, Montana, and as writer-reporter for the *Fort Benton Record,* writing a series of "frontier sketches" about his western experiences. He also wrote fine eyewitness accounts of the surrender of Chief Joseph and his Nez Percé in 1877, and of Sitting Bull's defiance of both United States and Canadian authorities.

Healy went to Alaska and the Yukon Territory in 1885, and in various partnerships established trading posts at Dyea, Fort Cudahy, Circle, St. Michael and, after the Klondike gold strike in 1896, Dawson. His North American Transportation and Trading Company had steamboats running prospectors, goods, and supplies on the Yukon River, and his celebrity was such that he counted as friends—or at least acquaintances—such luminaries as "Swiftwater Bill" Gates, Joaquin Miller, and Tex Rickard. If he didn't meet the penniless and then unknown Jack London in Dawson, at least London knew of Healy and used the trader as the basis for a rapacious character in his first novel, *A Daughter of the Snows,* in 1902.

William R. Hunt gives Johnny Healy his due as a brave, resolute, tough, and (within a qualified definition of the word) honest figure of the American West.—*Dale L. Walker, El Paso, Texas.*

Texas Folklore

Stray Tales of the Big Bend, by Elton Miles. (Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas 77843-4354. $25.00 cloth bound, $12.50 paper bound.)

The harshly beautiful environment of the Big Bend of Texas has long shaped the lives of the people who live there. The Chihuahuan Desert, with its island-like mountain ranges, is at once forbidding and alluring, deadly and delicate. A land of extremes, it tempts with forested peaks and kills with scorched flats, dismays with waterless stretches and surprises with hidden waterfalls. Even today survival demands a careful understanding of the land, even a communion with it.

In *Stray Tales of the Big Bend,* Elton Miles explores the folklore and history of six topics from the region, including the mysterious ghost bells—unexplained chimes which haunt the night as treasures supposedly reveal themselves to men. Miles recounts four such reports, including his own experience in the city of Alpine. Like Miles and four other people he quotes, this reviewer has heard the phenomenon—faint but definite tinkling chimes in a desert canyon noted for

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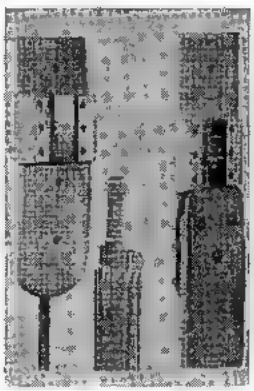

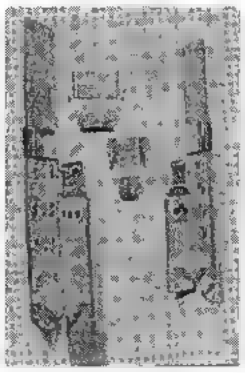

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A travel guide to the state of Wyoming, this book offers encyclopedic entries about historic sites and the characters who populated them along the state's main roadways. The book is divided into sections such as "Powder River Country" and "The Big Horn Basin," and includes many maps and photographs.

Suicide or Murder? The Strange Death of Governor Meriwether Lewis, by Vardis Fisher. (Swallow Press, Scott Quadrangle, Athens, Ohio 45701. $16.95 paper bound.)

A reprint of the 1962 edition on the mysterious death of the famous explorer and governor of Upper Louisiana Territory.

The Legend of Grizzly Adams, California's Greatest Mountain Man, by Richard H. Dillon. (University of Nevada Press, Reno, Nevada 89557-0076. $12.95 paper bound.)

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Ranald S. Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier, by Ernest Wallace. (Texas A&M University Press, Drawer C, College Station, Texas 77843-4354. $13.50 paper bound.)

A reprint of Wallace's rare 1965 book about the Indian campaigns of Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie in the early 1870s.

The Company of Adventurers, A Narrative of Seven Years in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company during 1867-1874, by Isaac Cowie. (University of Nebraska Press, 901 North 17th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0520. $45.00 cloth bound; $15.95 paper bound.)

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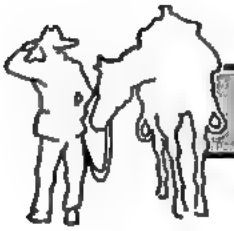
A section on the old Orient Railroad, although lacking significant new information, consolidates previously written accounts into a useful and concise history of the sixty-year construction of rails from Kansas, through the Big Bend, and on to Mexico's Gulf of California. The book's most important contribution to the story of the region is a fifty-three-page study, much of it based on primary sources, of Mexican bandit raids in the Big Bend between 1913 and 1916, and United States Army Major George T. Langhorne's punitive expedition into Mexico in 1916. To write a thorough account, Miles drew upon United States Senate and National Archives documents, court records, memoirs in the Archives of the Big Bend at Sul Ross State University, and the writings of contemporary newsmen.

Perhaps the most fascinating topic in the book is a study of the controversial Big Bend tablet, a mud cast discovered in a crevice near Hot Springs in 1961. Tossed aside by Big Bend National Park officials and either lost or destroyed, the tablet is said to have held an inscribed prayer that suggests European presence in the Big Bend in 302 A.D. Although he bases his story largely on previously published accounts, Miles supplements the versions with his own interview with the tablet's discoverer.

The book includes ten black-and-white photographs which evidently are more for visual relief than use as illustrations. Lacking cutlines, the photos of the Big Bend may mislead some readers into assuming they represent actual sites mentioned in adjoining text. Pertinent landscape shots or historic photographs would have been more effective.

As expected of a folklorist, Miles' style is straightforward and informal—highly readable but at the same time reminiscent of a campfire tale-telling session. While not all sections of the book hold equal interest, there is enough variety in this anthology to please most readers. It is a welcome addition to Miles' earlier collections of folklore, *Tales of the Big Bend* and *More Tales of the Big Bend.* —*Patrick Dearen, Midland, Texas.*



TRAILS GROWN DIM

Tow

I am seeking information about my great-grandfather, James Tow, and his wife Margaret Wilson Tow. He was born in 1809 in York, England, or possibly the United States. He had three brothers and two sisters, but I know nothing about them. James died in 1889 in Fredonia, Kansas. I have no dates for Margaret; however, she came to the United States from Glasgow, Scotland, at the age of twelve with her parents, two brothers, and two sisters, including her twin sister, Janet.

James and Margaret had eight children: Zeke, who died before 1889; John, who married a woman named Mel; Nettie, who married Thomas Hill; Mary, who married John Fox; Sarah, who married M.P. Fulkerson; Honor, who married Ed Shannon; Betty, who married a man with the last name of Craig; and Frank, who married Flora E. Craig in 1889 in Fredonia. Frank and Flora were my grandparents. Betty and Honor both married cousins of Flora's.

All of the children lived in Kansas for a time, and John later moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, dying there about 1929. Frank and Flora moved to Idaho, and Honor and Betty moved to California. John's nineteen-year-old son, Lonnie, died about 1900 or 1902 when a horse threw him; Honor had a son who died in Hawaii.

Many Tows live in Texas, Oklahoma, and Missouri, and we may be related. I would appreciate any help.—**Georgia White, 5300 Coral Drive, Sparks, Nevada 89433.**

Mills

I would like to find information about my great-grandfather, Morgan E. Mills. He was born November 2, 1794, in Ohio and settled in Randolph County, Indiana, about 1823. He had a brother, Jacob, who was also born in Ohio, but lived in Indiana.

Morgan married Rebecca Jane Driver in 1812. She was born February 25, 1795, in Ohio. Morgan and Rebecca had seven children.

Morgan died in Indiana in 1878 after a fall from a railroad platform. I would appreciate any information about his parents or other siblings.—**Shirley Mallory, PO Box 170, Edmore, Michigan 48829.**

Stroud

I am looking for information about Joy Ephram Stroud, born about 1847 in either New York or Illinois. He reportedly was in the Civil War, and he married Mary Stewart (Stuart) about 1875. They had a son, Herschel Starr Stroud, born about 1878, and a daughter, Helen.

The family made the land run into the Cherokee Strip and eventually settled in Perry, Oklahoma, where Joy and Mary died in the 1930s. Herschel worked in Guthrie, Oklahoma, divorced his first wife and married again. He apparently died in the mid-1940s. Helen died young when a horse threw her. I would appreciate any information about Joy, Mary, and Herschel, or hearing from any of their descendants.—**Virgil N. Hitchcock, 820 E. Waverly, Tucson, Arizona 85719.**

Earp

I am searching for information on my great-great-grandfather, William (Bill) Earp, a first cousin to Wyatt Earp. He was born around 1850 and died in the 1920s or 1930s. He was a miner near Douglas, Arizona, and moved to Douglas in the 1870s or 1880s.

Bill married a woman named Elizabeth and they had three children: Vinnolia, Mabel, and my great-grandmother, Imogene Drusilla Earp. I would also like to find information about Bill's brothers, and find old photographs of the family. I would appreciate any information.—**Jamie Sona, 501 North Oliver Drive, Aztec, New Mexico 87410.**

Readers' letters for "Trails Grown Dim" are printed as soon as space permits, so please be patient. Please type or print your query and limit letters to 150 words or less. Address to "Trails Grown Dim," Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Photos are welcome. We can't run current "missing persons" notices or lengthy genealogical requests, but we do attempt to print all letters as soon as we can. Any reader having information concerning persons referred to above is asked to communicate directly with the letter writer; please do not write to us.

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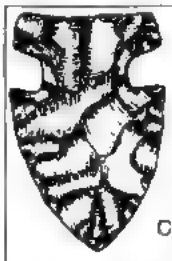

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JOHN LAWRENCE AND JACK SANDERS VS. THREE COWBOYS

August 29, 1884, Fetterman, Wyoming

By BILL O'NEAL

In 1884 at a dive near Fetterman, Wyoming, a wild but little-known gunbattle produced five casualties and a fatal aftermath. George W Hufsmith, in *The Wyoming Lynching of Cattle Kate, 1889,* described it as "one of the most unique, but nearly forgotten, trollop-house shootouts in all Western American history."

John Lawrence and Jack Sanders owned a frame saloon-bordello-dance hall a mile north of Fetterman. In mid-August 1884, cowboys Harry Crosby, John Fenix, and "Pretty Frank" Wallace went on a drunken spree and shot most of the windows out of the Lawrence and Sanders establishment. The owners angrily hustled the cowboys outside and told them never to return.

Two weeks later, on Saturday, August 29, Crosby, Fenix, and Wallace returned to Fetterman. They spent much of the afternoon drinking and playing faro at Billy Bacon's saloon. When they finally went outside and mounted their horses, Fenix drunkenly suggested riding to the Lawrence and Sanders place. Crosby and Wallace did not want to go, and deputy sheriff Malcolm Campbell shouted a warning from the porch of Bacon's saloon, but when Fenix spurred his horse in the direction of the dive, his two friends loyally followed.

When the three cowboys galloped up to the hog ranch, Sanders grabbed a shotgun and Lawrence armed himself with two revolvers. They grimly faced the cowboys at the entrance, but the drovers barged inside

"What in the hell is wrong with you?" blurted Wallace to Lawrence. "You look scared to death."

"I heard you came over to clean the place out!" shouted Lawrence at Fenix. He angrily offered Fenix twenty dollars to spit in his face, and the cowboy promptly launched a stream of spittle.

"Shoot the son of a bitch!" shouted Fenix. He leveled his six-gun and squeezed off two rounds at Lawrence, then whirled and shot prostitute Ella Wilson, who suffered a painful flesh wound.

The firing became general. Wallace shot at, but missed, gambler George Belden, then turned his gun on Lawrence.

Lawrence took a slug in the shoulder, but all three cowboys were hit. Sanders blasted Wallace with his shotgun. Buckshot ripped into his nose and an eye, and he dropped unconscious to the floor. Crosby was slightly wounded, but darted outside, leaped onto his mount, and galloped to a friendly ranch where he hid through the fall and winter.

A bullet ripped into Fenix's abdomen, and he staggered out to his horse. Two fellow cowboys helped him into his saddle, mounted up, and rode beside him into Fetterman Everyone in town had heard the gunfire, and Fenix was helped to a bed in a building used as a hospital

Malcolm Campbell hastily deputized a friend named Charlie Cobb, and the two men rode toward Lawrence and Sanders' place. They encountered the owners galloping toward town. The two saloonkeepers dismounted and brandished their weapons. They gave their version of the fight, then announced their intention to find and kill Fenix and Crosby.

Lawrence and Sanders headed toward Fetterman, but Campbell and Cobb outraced them. Campbell positioned himself at the hospital door with a six-gun in each fist. His wife, carrying their baby, joined him and begged Lawrence and Sanders not to shoot her husband.

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Campbell assured Lawrence and Sanders that Fenix was dying, and persuaded them to relinquish their guns. Campbell and Cobb then escorted them to Billy Bacon's saloon and ordered drinks. Dr. J.N. Bradley was summoned to tend Lawrence's and Fenix's wounds, but the gutshot cowboy died.

In the meantime, Wallace, who was blinded in one eye and whom everyone thought was dead, recovered consciousness, stumbled out to his horse, and rode to an empty building on the outskirts of Fetterman. Campbell discovered and arrested him. Wallace later filed suit against Lawrence for attempted murder, but Lawrence and Sanders obviously had resorted to self-defense.

When the three cowboys galloped up to the hog ranch, Sanders grabbed a shotgun and Lawrence armed himself with two revolvers. They grimly faced the cowboys at the entrance, but the drovers barged inside.
"What in the hell is wrong with you?" blurted Wallace to Lawrence. "You look scared to death."

Not long afterward Billy Bacon ventured out to the whorehouse, perhaps harboring hard feelings about the shooting of his cowboy customers. A quarrel erupted between Bacon and Lawrence, and both men whipped out pistols and fired at point-blank range. A slug hit Lawrence in the stomach and another hit Bacon in the throat. Two days later Dr. Bradley tried to remove the bullet in Bacon's throat, but he only dislodged it into his windpipe and the man choked to death. Lawrence died in agony the next day.

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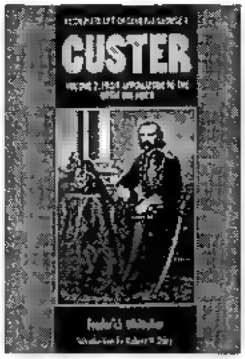

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Cynthia Anne's Brother

By MIKE BLAKELY

Many students of the West know the story of Cynthia Ann Parker, girl captive of the Comanches, wife of Chief Peta Nacona, mother of Chief Quanah Parker. Relatively little has been written, however, on the life of Cynthia Ann's brother, John Parker, though he also suffered as an Indian captive, lived among Comanches for many years, and outlived his legendary sister by forty-four years.

Indians raided Fort Parker, Texas, on May 19, 1836, and carried away five captives, including nine-year-old Cynthia Ann and six-year-old John Parker. The Indians separated the Parker children forever after three days. Cynthia Ann went on to her fabled life with the Quahadi Comanches while John fell into relative obscurity among the Kiowa Comanche band.

After holding John Parker for six years, the Indians ransomed him back to whites in 1842. But John did not easily revert to the ways of the white man. He had become a Comanche boy. He soon returned to the Indians, ostensibly to search for Cynthia Ann.

John became a Comanche warrior and began participating in raids along the Rio Grande and into Mexico. On one raid south of the border, John's band captured a beautiful Mexican girl of Aztec descent named Dona Maria. John fell for the captive beauty and wanted her for his wife.

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John became a Comanche warrior and began participating in raids along the Rio Grande and into Mexico. On one raid south of the border, John's band captured a beautiful Mexican girl of Aztec descent named Dona Maria.

John fell for the captive beauty and wanted her for his wife. Dona Maria had no inclination to resist. The kind treatment John promised made her devoted to him. The couple traveled north into Texas, to be married in the Comanche way at the end of the journey.

Then John's life was again changed forever when he came down with smallpox on the trail north. The Indians feared an epidemic and quickly abandoned him to die on the plains. Dona Maria, however, would not leave her protector. She stayed with John and nursed him back to health.

Thereafter, John refused to have anything to do with the nomads who had cast him aside. He took Dona Maria back to Mexico and became a rancher and guide near the border. Those who knew him said his features looked like those of a Comanche warrior, though he had not a single drop of Indian blood in his veins.

DURING THE CIVIL WAR, Parker, who still considered himself a Texan, joined a Mexican company of the Confederate Army. He refused, however, to serve the Confederacy east of the Sabine River. He thought Texans should fight only on Texas soil. On the way back to Mexico he stayed with an uncle he had not seen since his capture in 1836.

Parker remained in Mexico after the war. He declined any more visits with his white relatives in Texas, even though Cynthia Ann had been recaptured from the Comanches in 1860 and was struggling to readjust to white civilization. She lost the struggle and died in 1871.

John did receive one visitor about 1880. His nephew, Chief Quanah Parker, last war chief of the Comanches, came to see him. Quanah had ended warfare with whites and now led his tribe in accepting their ways.

John Parker far outlived his famous sister and even his nephew, Quanah, who died in 1911. His extraordinary life ended on his ranch in Mexico in 1915.

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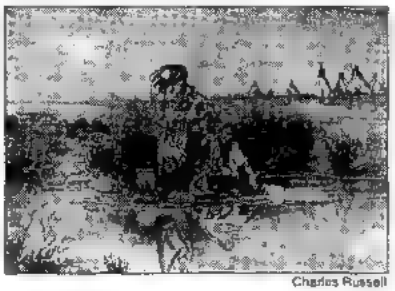

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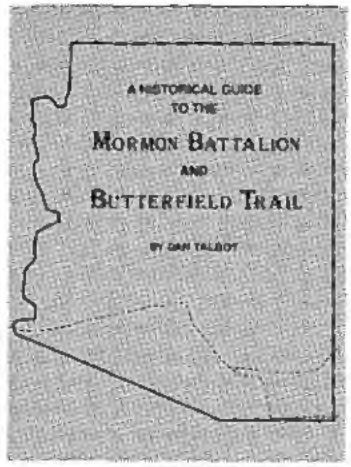

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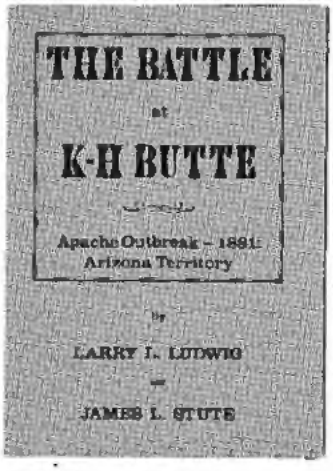

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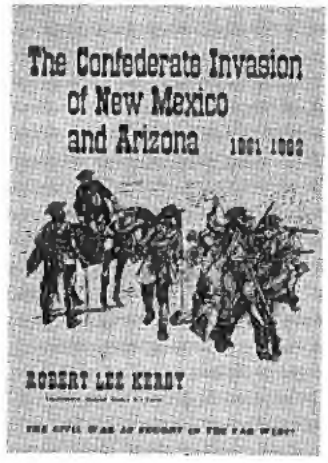

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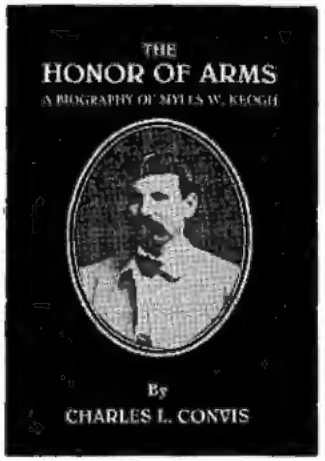

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